The Matrimonial Agent of Potsdam

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ3 Copyright No.

Shelf W735M

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE MATRIMONIAL AGENT

OF

POTSDAM

A HUMORO-SOCIAL ROMANCE

FROM THE GERMAN OF A. VON WINTERFELD

BY

EL RAPHA

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS,
COPYRIGHT
DEC 22 1886
29397
CITY OF WASHINGTON.

NEW YORK
THOMAS R. KNOX & CO.
SUCCESSORS TO JAMES MILLER
813 BROADWAY
1887

PZ3
W735M

COPYRIGHT, 1886, BY
THOMAS R. KNOX & CO.

TROW'S
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY,
NEW YORK.

THE MATRIMONIAL AGENT OF POTSDAM.

CHAPTER I.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT WOMEN, LOVE, AND MATRIMONY.

Among all created beings there is a desire to form pairs—a tendency on the part of both sexes to unite.

In this desire, in this tendency, the first instinctive longing for matrimony is seen.

The male plant feels attracted to the female; the gentle breezes promote contact and kisses between them which are more or less fragrant, and, although these contacts and osculations are given and received unconsciously, still they produce the physical results of matrimony, and afford poets the justification of attributing a soul to plants having a corporeal form. Thus it has been poetically said that the violets titter to and kiss each other, and that the dreamy pine-tree wastes and suffers in his silent love for the tall and graceful palm upon the burning desert, in the distant south beyond his reach.

We find the same phenomena in the animal world, but vastly more pronounced.

The birds, especially the tender doves, the merry sparrows, and even the raven and the magpie, who usually are not very strict as regards the rights of property, lead a permanent wedded life, and the female, especially, is faithful and constant.

Even those migratory birds, of whom the males and the females, in the fall of the year, congregate in separate houses, and apart make their long journeys, find one another again in the spring of the year.

The male nightingale beats about and searches in the silent, shadowy bush till his lately-arrived female partner, who recognizes her loving husband by his voice, joins him for the purpose of beginning a new and fresh love-life after their long separation; and the rough, robber sparrow-hawk, after leading the life of a vagabond through the winter, finds himself again, in the spring of the year, with the same female bird, upon the same tree which they occupied together in the previous autumn.

Among the wild birds these marriages are the truest and purest, the partridges remain together during the entire winter in families, and not till the spring of the year, when the young brood has acquired the necessary training to obtain their own food, do these detach themselves from the parents, for the purpose of starting out in the world and forming families for themselves.

Among the domesticated birds, fowls, such as geese, ducks, etc., which have already been spoiled and corrupted by training, matrimony has degenerated into a polygamous life, and the family tie is in this way loosened in the most demoralizing manner.

We find the same conditions in other animals. The wild and the free creatures living in the woods and fields, such as lions, bears, and especially apes, form firmly united families, and have well-regulated and sedate households; while domestic animals, such as horses, cows, sheep, and swine, owing to the slavish life they are born in and live in till they perish, have lost all proper feelings for the family they

originated from, and have no other idea but to propagate themselves according to the refined combinations instigated by their master, man.

The dog, to whom these attributes are only partly applicable, is in reality a most independent and reckless fellow, for he will run after every female of his kind without becoming attached to any one. The indiscriminately loving Thomas cat is no better in that respect, and creates such detestable rows in nightly escapades at his various rendezvous, that he reminds one of the dissolute serenades of the revelling students of Salamanca.

As in the lower orders, the disposition to form pairs exists in the noblest of all animals, man, though in the latter the circumstances and status which the two sexes bear to each other have, in the course of centuries, owing to the progress of culture and its accompanying spirit of the times, become greatly altered.

In man there is not only an attraction of body to body, not only the instinctive animal feeling of friendship that is combined with it, but the soul joins it, and the spirit that permeates both corporeal longings invests it with the nimbus-rays of poetry; on the other hand, however, this tender and exalted bearing which he has thus attained has become so base, by the corrupting influence of over-refinement and speculation, that he ought to blush in the presence of the lower animals.

Thus there always remains a mixture of half animal and half angel in man, and now the one, and then again the other predominates, and we have an eternal strife between both elements that does not permit us to become perfect—which, alas! will never be otherwise on this earth.

An effort to attain as near as possible to the ideal is all that we can do.

In olden times woman was the natural representative of love, culture, and elegant manners, of which the illustrious names of Aspasia, Corinna, and Sappho attest sufficiently; and albeit the Greeks lacked the fantastic enthusiasm of the middle ages, still they were capable of loving to such a degree of self-sacrifice as is totally unknown at the present time.

Who does not know the story of Hero and Leander? It was on the festal day dedicated to Venus and Adonis, at Sestos, on the Thracian coast, that mutual love sprung up at first sight in the breast of both, with such glowing ardor that it could not be suppressed. But Hero was a priestess of the goddess Venus, and her dear parents, as usual, were worshippers of selfishness and prejudice, so that a matrimonial union between the lovers was altogether out of the question. Nowadays such hopeless condition would cause them, at the most, a slight and temporary illness; but not so with Leander. He did not allow himself to be deterred or frightened by such obstacles, but nightly, in all kinds of weather, he swam the Hellespont—taking an hour and a quarter to cross it—to where his beloved Hero awaited him, who received him with warm arms and pressed him to a still more warm heart. With heating drinks and her hot love she reanimated the chilled form of her lover. At daybreak he would wrap himself in his light mantle, which had meanwhile been dried before the fire, and perfectly happy with the blissful remembrance of his enjoyments, he would swim back to Abydos, and soon was absorbed in the business of the day, as if nothing unusual had happened. The mere thought of such an act nowadays would be sufficient to produce an everlasting cold in the head of our youth, who would then swathe themselves in flannels and require foot-baths and cough medicine for weeks.

The more serious and sedate Roman matrons enjoyed great respect in their country, and received the homage and love of the men till shortly before the fall of the empire—which was then tantamount to the civilized world—when the old honorable customs broke down and were swept away by the great changes which society underwent.

During the grand and chivalrous middle ages woman attained to the highest state of culture, and received the homage and attention of the most valiant knights. That was the time of the beautiful manners, of the knight-errants and minstrelsy, when the virtue and the beauty of the wife was the sun around which everything revolved, when she charmed everybody and ennobled everything.

In the middle ages woman exercised an inspiring, though at times also a vicious, power upon the male world, but she had justly acquired this power by the true and voluntary homage of the men, by her great worth and noble virtues, by the poetic feelings she inspired; and the noble deeds that were performed in her name were sung and proclaimed by the troubadours, which our sober times are no more capable of producing.

We talk so much nowadays of the excellent education we give our daughters! But candor and unbiassed judgment would soon convince us that our ladies have learned very little, if, as is customary, at sixteen, seventeen, or more years of age, they put on long gowns and appear in society, or, as it is socially expressed, they "come out." They can speak a little in one or two foreign languages, with a marked accent; sometimes they are only able to translate their thoughts in foreign words, and which is of no earthly use to them whatever; they play upon the piano after a fashion, sing a little to

their own satisfaction and to other people's annoyance, some silly ditty; they paint some unrecognizable things upon the now fashionable plaques or china, dance wonderfully well, study the latest fashion very hard, strive to their utmost to make themselves attractive to the sterner sex in appearance; but care very little for the higher attributes of the sex, or for the duties they may be destined to perform.

How different it was in the middle ages! Then the youth, who now is trained at school and college till he has attained to man's estate, was sent as a page, as early as the tenth year, into service of some nobleman's house or of some renowned soldier, while the daughter remained at home till she was eighteen or twenty years old. And first of all she was taught the duties of housekeeping, among which was spinning—but which nowadays is only known by the presence of a fancy spinning-wheel in some ultra fashionable parlor; next embroidery, which in those days was a real art and attained to the highest degree of excellence and perfection, because such things as wall paper was unknown, and the cold bare walls were covered with rich and beautifully embroidered tapestry. In addition, the ladies were obliged to acquire the art of tailoring and dressmaking, for they not only had to make their own garments, but those for the whole household. Vocal and instrumental music, and the languages were also assiduously cultivated; but above all, they were taught to be virtuous and kind, to be modest and refined in manners, qualities that readily won them the esteem and regard of the men, and charmed all those that associated with them.

Thus the ladies acquired all the excellent qualities of the heart and mind, together with the refinement of good breeding, which was regarded as the highest of womanly virtues by the knights of the middle ages.

Love and heroic deeds, in order to win reciprocal love, were the main requirements and the main passion of the youth of the middle ages; and if in their endeavors to win the esteem of their lady-loves they occasionally went too far, and to us appear ridiculous, it is nevertheless necessary to recognize the power which love exercised, and which filled the heart of the true knight, as also the high price and value which the illustrious dame placed upon the love which she reciprocated.

The power of the imagination of love was often carried to such a pitch that instances are recorded where a knight, from mere hearsay, became actually infatuated with a woman he had never seen. The provincial poet Jansee Rudel fell in love with a Countess of Tripoli from a description given of her by a returning pilgrim, and he composed a number of beautiful poems in praise of her, though he saw her not and she heard him not. After he had thus sung and suffered for a long while, and being unable longer to resist his longing to see his unknown love, he took his cross and sailed for the Holy Land. He became deathly sick at sea, but arrived in Tripoli alive, and was taken to a hotel—which was then called a herberge. When the Countess of Tripoli learned of the circumstances, she repaired to the young man's couch and locked him in her arms. The pleasurable emotions which this act exercised upon the dying poet caused him to revive, he opened his eyes, and thanked God that He had permitted him to live long enough to see his beloved mistress. The countess embraced him again, but the emotion was too much for him, for he soon expired. The grief of the countess over the death of the noble youth was so great that she retired to a convent, where she too soon ended her life.

If our pretty young ladies of to-day were loved

so ardently and loved as much in return, how happy we would be!

When the Knight Gawan was accepted by the beautiful Obilot as her champion, she gave him a bracelet which she had worn upon her arm. He fastened this bracelet upon his shield and went into the battle with it. After the fight was over he brought it back, dreadfully cut and hacked, when she again put it upon her arm and proudly wore it.

The same thing was done by Gahument and Herzeleine with a chemise. First she wore the fine cambric chemise, and then he put it over his coat of mail. Badly cut up and pierced as it was by the blows and thrusts which he had received, she took it and put it on, and wore it next to the skin. They did the same thing with eighteen chemises, and as the valiant Gahument was brought to her dead, the tender Herzeleine wanted to put on the torn and bloody shirt which he had worn when he was killed, but her parents would not permit her to do it.

But things did not remain so nice and affecting always. The ladies, gradually spoiled by the excessive adulation and devotion that was shown them, became proud and overbearing, and exacted such severe proofs from their champions that it was scarcely possible to perform them; but they were nevertheless executed till the knights themselves lapsed into a demoralized state, and the entire beautiful custom fell into disuse.

Although Ulrich von Lichtenstein, with indescribable satisfaction, drank the water which his adored mistress washed her beautiful hands in, he was nevertheless subsequently compelled to submit to an operation to rectify his misshaped mouth, because she found fault with it; and Paroli hacked off his little finger, which was broken in a tourney, and sent it to his lady-love in a beautiful casket.

Another troubadour, Paire Vidal, at the wish expressed by his fair lady, allowed himself to be sewed up in a fur skin, in which he ran about on all fours in the mountains, and was chased by the shepherds and their dogs till he dropped down half dead, and had to be carried home.

Such things, however, if carried to a pitch of absurdity, could only result in one condition, namely, the breaking down of the custom from sheer folly of the acts, and hence the entire practice was soon totally abandoned.

The flowers of knighthood were soon swept away, and a long, cold winter settled upon society; it was all over with poetry and passion, and soul-delirium or phantasy gave place to soberness.

The knight now went hunting, and when at dusk he came home tired and weary, he caroused till midnight, and then, overpowered by wine, dropped down upon the hard boards, and there he passed the rest of the night and part of the following day.

Of what use was it then for the ladies, with such knights, to be beautiful and accomplished? They withdrew themselves from such companions, and locked themselves in their own apartments, and became as serious and silent as formerly they were serene and amiable; but deep in the working centres of their thoughts they meditated how they could regain the hearts of the men and reclaim the degenerated spirit of the age.

Thus there dawned after the revolution a new time, and Poetry and Love failed to awaken new morning glories.

The tender, naïve enthusiasm of the heart which went to sleep at the time the glory of knighthood fell into decay, did not awaken again; idealism was constantly more and more supplanted by realism.

Speculation laid its chilling effect upon the heart,

practical understanding displaced the impractical mind; calculation took the place of feelings, the most sacred emotions of the human breast sank down to a mere commercial commodity, the social relations and laws did their part to hinder and contract Poetry and the voluntary tendency of the heart.

Let us consider for a moment the position assigned to woman to-day, compared with the exalted position she occupied during the middle ages.

True, women are to-day the true representatives and custodians of pure Love, its customs and tender mysteries; but the spirit of the times and social circumstances have overshadowed and levelled these fine old qualities. Outward show and a certain amount of comedy acting and masking, have been acquired by them, which the men on the one hand exact, and on the other severely condemn.

At a time when so many imitation jewels are worn the genuine stone loses its full value, it is not regarded as genuine, and discouraged by this fact, it also transforms itself into an imitation.

The tendency to self-sacrifice constanly becomes more rare. Woman, it is true, even at this day possesses a certain amount of power which man has conceded to her, but it is only an illusive power. The sovereignty of the middle ages has been transformed into the constitutionalism of modern times, and, in place of the passionate, deeply-felt tenderness of the heart which was then considered as her due, she is now disposed of with mere phrases of platitude.

And what has become of the lyric-singing knight-errants of the middle ages? Secretaries of legations, lieutenants, inspectors, government clerks and idlers, those that have passed, and those that have not passed the third examination, who amble

through life without earnestness, and often without the least object !

A feeble, short-sighted, rheumatic, thin-haired, and blasé youth has grown up out of the barren soil of the sober, calculating modern times, an egoistic youth who loves himself only, and who is only attracted to the fair sex by frivolity or speculation.

Really they play an unhappy rôle, the successors of the champion-knights of the middle ages; they do not dance any more, because it is too taxing to their feeble energies; they sing no more, because they haven't soul enough to sing, and because they rarely study any lyrical music; and the piercing sighs which escaped the breasts of our ancestors at the mere thought of a female, are now only mentioned in romances and sensational stories.

There are, it is true, exceptions to these, since no rule is without exceptions; and far be it from us to say that every youth, and still more every tender Magdalene, should feel hurt or depressed by the peculiar tendencies of our times just described; rather should each one feel elevated by the thought that he or she is the exception, and that, like a lotos flower, will soar above the weeds in this garden, incline its pale, languishing face dreamily toward another lotos flower, till both die from tender, bashful love-yearnings, or render each other happy as was the case in the middle ages.

But let us turn to the peculiarities of our times.

Because woman was compelled to descend from the flowery throne of the middle ages, when she was sovereign and rendered everyone happy; because she has been refused the privilege of participating in all kinds of business, has been denied permission to gain a livelihood independently, that would protect her against the dangers that beset

her; because, finally, she has been restricted to the mere passiveness and dependence of existence, her former good qualities have become suppressed and her evil ones, such as vanity, love of show, coquetry, and a longing for frivolities and light dissipation have been fostered.

Custom and social laws, which man has made, have left to woman but one career, namely, the career of matrimony.

For this object woman is reared and trained, for this object she is educated, being superficially taught some studies and totally neglecting others, which would be of the utmost consequence to her in her new sphere of matrimony and maternity.

Thus woman is partially a victim of our social arrangements, and when she is thus deficient in knowledge and uninteresting, it is not surprising that matrimonial life is often unhappy, or that so many marriages end in bitter disappointments and separations.

Especially in the higher stations of life is this unfortunate circumstance—which is almost always due to selfishness and fostered by inconsiderateness,—most frequently met with.

Among the nobility, in the higher, and often even in the middle, stations of life, it was the custom, until quite recently, to follow the practice pursued by the reigning families, namely, to arrange a marriage diplomatically by the parents, either for the purpose of retaining an estate in the family, or for some other equally mercenary object. Happily, the instances where a person is forced to marry his or her cousin are now quite rare.

Being destined for a matrimonial life, the girls are taught a little music, a little general knowledge, a good deal of dancing, they pay much attention to dress, and when they have acquired these qualifica-

tions they "come out," at sixteen, seventeen, or more years of age, and take their position in "society," which in reality means that they are in the "market," to be had by the highest bidder, or perhaps they are cast into the arms of him whom a scheming mamma deems a good "catch" for her darling.

With beating hearts and calculating judgment the buyers are awaited, and each one is estimated according to his possessions, in a real commercial manner.

The rich and high-toned daughter must not marry below her station; she is to acquire something, because the dearly beloved parents acquired or inherited something; otherwise, what is the use of giving the child such a costly education? All the great cost and trouble would thus be thrown away.

And if the girl has really retained enough feeling and determination, preferring to marry a poor young man with good principles rather than some decrepit old Crœsus, she is denounced and discarded by her relations and friends, and life is often rendered a burden to her by the treatment she receives on that score.

Poor girls are, in this respect, much better off, for their parents make little or no objections to their choice. True, they can often flatter themselves with the thought that they were wooed with no mercenary motives; can they also truly claim that they married out of pure love? It would certainly be a remarkable coincidence that two hearts meet upon this earth in which mutual love is kindled.

That, however, does not often happen. Most girls at first are entirely content with the change in their condition; the new clothes they procured, and the new occupation they have, fill all their wants. This contentment they frequently palm off on them-

selves and their partners as genuine love and affection. Later on, when new duties and new burdens become superadded, even this pretence at love is swept away, and then there is nothing left but discontent and disappointment.

Love at first sight, that is said to penetrate into two hearts simultaneously, and kindles into a flame, may no doubt occur, but it is not always the most abiding nor the best; still less can be expected from an engagement that ensues during the intervals of a dance at a ball. At such times the heart is coated with too much gloss, and the mind intoxicated with excitement.

In what is called the middle class of society matrimony often transpires from pure inclination, because then both sides are less pretentious, and both parties fully comprehend the duties that will subsequently devolve upon them.

The peasant and day laborer generally have a circle from which to select, and naturally will take the one that pleases them best; still they always regard a wife as something that is an absolute necessity rather than an ornament.

Well, we have said a good deal about woman, both favorably and unfavorably, but on the whole excused her many faults which custom and manners have engendered in her. Let us now say a word for man, who has placed her in that position, and who as a result must suffer for it; for under such circumstances, what is unfavorable to one sex must necessarily react upon the other.

A great many years have gone by since the fine old days of the middle ages. The childlike and naïve ideas of those days have become sharp and tricky by the file of calculating judgment and intelligence; impracticable poetry has given way to practical prose; the revolution that has swept through

all countries like a cyclone has carried off many a senseless frippery, and initiated the great work of levelling all to one standard; the population of the world has increased vastly, and the young men have no muse to sing of by day and no fair women to dream of by night; they are obliged to plunge into the midst of the throng and battle for life, strive and labor to acquire a competence, or even only a mere livelihood.

A young man, who naturally enjoys love and its delights best, is therefore compelled to labor a long while before he can think of sharing his modest and hard-earned income with a life-companion.

Especially is this the case with officials, who become old and gray at a desk before their salary is sufficient to maintain a family; and even the younger sons of rich parents or of the nobility have to pass their best years at some small court or in the army, because the kind parents are not disposed to settle upon the younger son enough to enable him to marry; and as the latter dare not engage in some profitable pursuit without losing caste, there is no other alternative for him but to dawdle away his life and keep piling up his debts.

Hence most young men, when they wish to marry, are compelled to look at the amount of the dowry the wife will bring with her, and if one has once commenced to hanker for the almighty dollar, avarice and the desire to possess soon fills the heart, and one will oftener speculate to make a good *parti*, in which love is but a secondary consideration, than to gain a position by toil and self-denial, and then be able to choose according to the dictates of his heart.

Thus one often sacrifices thoughtlessly his love and domestic happiness for the sake of the wherewith to live a life of ease and comfort, setting the worst possible example to his children.

Some philosophical heads, however, seek to avoid this dilemma. They do not want to make a business matter of matrimony, and for obvious reasons do not want to risk their forty-five years of age with a girl that is only twenty; nor again the little they may have saved with a poor one who, they fear, is bound sooner or later to get the greater part of it.

These philosophers form that happy (?) class of old bachelors, the noblest representatives of Egotism.

The old bachelor, it is true, does not expect to get anything, neither is he disposed to give anything; he does not expect to be made happy, nor does he hope to make another happy.

But a time comes when he is old and ill, when he goes to bed but does not leave it, and a hired nurse —trained to obduracy—sits at his bedside, who, albeit she serves him, does so for money only, and not for love.

Then he may regret; then he may suffer from the void he feels; then he may experience the bitter pang of regret at having lived all his lifetime for himself alone, and hence must die by himself, without possessing a loving hand to smoothe his pillow, to close his eyes, or drop a tear upon his bier.

Unregretted, he is packed into his coffin; unregretted, his possessions are quickly divided, and upon his grave bloom no roses nor any forget-me-nots.

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMEN'S CLUB.

Whoever is acquainted with Berlin knows the two restaurants which are situated directly behind the Potsdam bridge, opposite each other, like Scylla and Charybdis, and which are named respectively the Café Mielens and the Café Boulevard.

Anyone coming across Potsdam bridge, and attempting to make a detour in order to avoid Café Boulevard is sure to be swallowed up, as it were, and without his being able to explain how it happened, by Café Mielens; and whoever seeks to avoid the latter is sure to rnn into the arms of Café Boulevard; and scarcely has he had time to draw his breath when he finds himself seated behind a seidel (a mug) of foaming beer which the ubiquitous kelner has placed before him.

The place behind the bridge is very well adapted for restaurants, for a large concourse of people here gather every afternoon, having started for a promenade from various parts of the city. They are soon swallowed up by these establishments, which become enlivened like beehives in summer time.

Both restaurants, the Café Boulevard and the Café Mielens, are among the very first to be filled up with patrons, consisting of army officers, government officials, members of the nobility, etc.

It is very pleasant to sit near the balustrade of Scylla or Charybdis and watch the dark stream of humanity, constantly changing as it flows by. The human mass seems to overflow from the narrower side streets into the wide Potsdam thoroughfare, as

if the life-blood of the city was seeking for a free avenue to course unimpeded.

It is very interesting to look more closely upon the current, and examine more attentively the single drops of blood of which this living stream is composed.

Most of these promenaders are officials or persons in the middle station of life, for artisans and laborers are tied during the entire week to their workbench, and are only seen on the boulevard or in the open country on Sundays, accompanied by wife and child, when they generally inhale as much dust, and suffer from the heat almost as much, as they do in their narrow rooms.

Some of the junior officials are always seen in this crowd. Generally they have a pale, pasty complexion, flat chests, and are short-sighted, and crawl along as if life has been utterly crushed out of them. The higher officials, on the other hand, strut along with an overbearing, supercilious air, barely ever deigning to notice anyone below their own rank. Now and then a couple of young damsels saunter by, who are fully aware that they attract unlimited notice both from those seated behind the railings and the promenaders, as is evidenced from the half shy, half coquettish glances they cast in return.

This is about the picture one may behold every afternoon if he has the opportunity of sitting behind the balustrade of the Café Mielens or of the Café Boulevard.

Both these establishments possess germs within the mass of their frequenters, which are separate from the latter; both germs were already near dying, the one because the poisonous worm gnawed at it, the other because old age had dried up its juices.

In the Café Mielens was the headquarters of a summer club, consisting of young gentlemen out of

the so-called noble order, who had the right of taking up the most eligible and select places upon the veranda, where they could be plainly seen and where they could plainly see everyone passing by.

In the Café Boulevard, on the other hand, congregated every afternoon, winter and summer, a number of gentlemen of the good old times, who had here a separate arbor and gossiped away several hours while sipping their after-dinner coffee and smoking a cigar.

As in life extremes often meet, so happened it here too.

Youth was seated near old age, the Future was near the Past; but every age looks back upon a different youth, every youth cannot expect such an age.

One club was being consumed by a poisonous worm within it; of the other the sharp tooth of time gnawed off one wilted leaf after another.

Let us first take a look at the Club of the Young Gentlemen, at the Café Mielens.

The members were mostly civilians, gentlemen of leisure, who live nobody knows how; ex-officers, who on account of their debts early left the army, and now led a sort of refined tramp life; attachés of the Home and Foreign offices of State; barristers without any practice, and other men without aim or ambition, save that for the "tender passion," that is to say, for the ballet and the opera when it contains a ballet performance, horse-racing, woman and play and idleness in general, and the creation of debts in particular.

Officers in active service, as a rule, do not join such clubs, but form associations of their own—especially since the stirring days of 1848—that meet in armories or barracks like apartments.

In regard to our society in Café Mielens, its winter quarters were Unter den Linden; in summer,

when "everybody" in Berlin is supposed to be away, it would have been altogether too monotonous for the few noble members of the club who could not get away to meet there, and hence the selection of the Café Mielens, near the Potsdam bridge, where the whole of Berlin passed and repassed daily, where the resident members could while away their afternoons till the summer season began at one of the theatres.

To-day the club was sadly neglected, more so in fact than usual, most of the seats upon the veranda being unoccupied; the only persons visible there were two young men and a dog, and all three creatures seemed to be suffering terribly from *ennui*. Evidently none of them had yet ordered anything, for no refreshments were to be seen upon the small marble table between them and the waiter, who, like a sentinel on duty, with his napkin slung upon his shoulder for a gun, marched up and down near by, so as to be able to respond promptly at the least nod or summons of the gentlemen present.

One of the two young men was the Baron Branco, one of those mysterious personages of whom no one knows anything as to where they come from or how they exist.

This class of persons, as is well known, have no resources, and yet spend a good deal, pretend to have an inexpressible contempt for money, as if they would not soil their patrician fingers by touching it—which perhaps accounts for the way in which they neglect to pay their debts.

Of the Baron Branco nothing definite was known; several years before he made his appearance in Berlin and joined the noble coming generation; he spent a good deal of money and attained considerable notoriety in a certain circle of society.

He was a man of about thirty years of age, tall, rather lean, and had a most aristocratic, blasé appearance.

The finely shaped head, with elegantly twisted moustache, would have been declared handsome but for the commencing baldness of the crown and the evidences of fast living expressed in his mobile countenance, together with an undefined shy and uncertain look in his eyes which invoked neither trust nor confidence.

Although it was apparent at first sight that Baron Branco had led a fast life, had plucked many a flower, and after enjoying its fragrance had cast it contemptuously away, still he had a good deal of success with women, especially unmarried ones, though of late he evidently sought to cast himself loose from his former adventures.

The charm which a man having the reputation of being a roué exercises over some young girls is a remarkable phenomenon. The purest and most innocent soul is often irresistibly attracted toward one that is diametrically opposite. Perhaps it is because certain hopes, thoughts, and interests which are both exciting and pleasant are awakened in the young breast that is only just beginning to dream; perhaps it is also because of the noble and beautiful task which the young creature is ready to assume—of redeeming and reclaiming a lost person.

The handsome baron was faultlessly attired; he leaned back in a chair in the most negligent manner; his right hand played with the indispensable lorgnon, for all noble young men are short-sighted, and in his left he held a cigarette, which he occasionally puffed in the most indolent manner, and at long intervals blew a tiny cloud of bluish smoke from his aristocratic mouth.

Opposite him, sat a little dainty fellow almost girlish in appearance, who smiled incessantly.

If it is possible to compare the human physiognomy with that of an animal, then this youth might be compared to a little white shrew-mouse that cheerily looks out of its cage upon the world.

He, too, evidently was not a native of Berlin, not even a Prussian, but from one of the small adjoining states that look so pretty upon the colored map of Germany, and in size his fatherland was correctly mirrored by him.

Everything about the Count Nöhre, which was the name of this youth, was small and neat, and from his neck dandled a double lorgnon, and between the second and third fingers of his left hand he held a big Upman cigar, which lost its fire every moment or two, because he was only a "Sunday smoker."

The third animated being to be seen upon the veranda was a morose, sulky bull-dog, with red eyes and long pendulous chops, that had blissfully fallen asleep under the table.

"Awfully dull to-day!" Baron Branco remarked, after long silence, in a dry, harsh voice.

"Yeth, it is terribly dull!" lisped the little Count Nöhre, a deeper smile overspreading his sharp, mouse-like countenance; then he carried his dead cigar to his mouth again, sucked at it in a timid manner several times, and allowed his elegant, knightly right hand to drop in a leisurely manner in his lap.

"Ballet-performances have already commenced," said Baron Branco, after a pause, "but then nobody is in town yet; one sees nothing the livelong day but these plebeian faces, which is enough to give one a fit of yawning."

"Awfully plebeian fathes!" echoed the little

Count Nöhre, going through the same performance with his cold cigar as before.

"Will take something to kill time," continued the Baron, nodding to the waiter almost imperceptibly with his aristocratic head, and which instantly enlivened the attendant as if he had been electrified.

"Cup of coffee," ordered the baron; "but real hot and strong!"

"Bottle of Comthurei ale for me," drawled the little count.

The waiter looked surprised and humbly ventured to say:

"The Herr Count will please excuse me for saying that, although we have Comthurei ale, yet it is not good and no one drinks it."

"Doesn't matter!" returned the little man, becoming still more amiable. "Let it taste bad; it has at any rate a fine old name, and every poor devil does not drink it."

The waiter bowed obsequiously and disappeared, and soon returned bringing the ordered refreshments, receiving from each gentleman a small coin in payment, the change from which it was intimated to him to keep by a gracious nod of the head.

Although Baron Branco had ordered his coffee to be hot and strong, he allowed it to become cold, and subsequently forgot to drink it altogether, and the little count repeatedly gazed at his murky Comthurei ale in a good-humored way without tasting it.

Thus some time passed by, when another elegantly dressed young man was seen coming through the garden, and soon mounted the few steps leading to the place occupied by the members of the club.

He was quite young, and would have formed a most agreeable contrast to the dissipated-looking Baron Branco and the silly, friendly little Count

Nöhre, if his face had not borne the expression of extreme pedantry and conceit, that, for one so young, was repellent in the extreme.

He looked as if nature had intended him to be an expert mathematician, who was constantly engaged in solving the problem of his life.

"Good morning, Collin!" said Baron Branco to him as soon as he caught sight of him, adding, ironically: "That's what you call constancy, I presume. You are one of the youngest of the club, and as unfaithful as the older ones."

Government Solicitor von Collin, greeted somewhat haughtily the gentlemen present, ordered coffee from the waiter that followed close upon his heels, and replied, while taking a seat between the baron and the count:

"I was away to the baths for a week and only returned yesterday. I don't think you can ask for a greater degree of punctuality than I show by appearing among you the very next day after returning."

"Exceedingly grateful to you, dear Collin," said Branco; "but what took you to the baths? Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, yes," returned the solicitor dryly, lighting a cigar.

"Then you played?" asked the little count, blinking with his eyelids good-humoredly.

"I never play," returned Herr von Collin. "I never touch a card."

"Yes, you are a wonderfully virtuous young man," sneered the baron. "You don't drink, you don't play, you don't ride, and have no gallant adventures. Tell me why, in the name of all that is pleasant, you don't do any of these things?"

"Because I can't!" returned Collin, dryly.

"Oh!" ejaculated the baron, astonished; while the little count smiled most agreeably.

"And also because I don't want to!" added the barrister.

"Nonsense!" laughed Branco.

"Simply nonsense!" echoed the little count.

"No, it is neither 'nonsense,' nor 'simply nonsense,'" returned the solicitor, "but the wisdom of life, that one must possess if he wishes to gain some headway in this world. In a word, for I am not ashamed to confess it, I haven't money enough to procure me all these pleasures, and against incurring debts my inmost soul rebels. I am a pretty good calculator, and to be constantly obliged to figure up deficits would soon undermine my rest and destroy my peace."

"Then you intend to undergo the tortures of a third examination, and, by the sweat of your brow, earn your livelihood forever in the government employ?" asked the baron, mockingly.

"No, I have no such intention," returned the solicitor, a slight smile of good humor overspreading his usually serious countenance. "And that was just the reason why I incurred the expense of a journey to the baths."

"So as to gain strength to undergo a third examination?" sneeringly said Branco, again.

"No, to seek a wife," answered the barrister; "that is to say, a rich wife, whose fortune will be sufficient to afford me the pleasures you mentioned, and enable me to give up the dry and toilsome legal practice."

"And you found a goddess?" the baron interjected, ironically.

"There were goddesses enough," replied Collin; "but none that answered my purpose."

"And what qualities are you looking for?"

"One possessing a certain sum of money, which I have figured out as requisite to enjoy life with, and from which I will allow no reduction."

The handsome Baron Branco slightly sank his head on his breast and lapsed into thoughtfulness, that seemingly was both pleasant and unpleasant to him; the little count, however, who, at the turn the conversation took, looked more pleased than ever, sucked once more at his cold cigar and then lisped out, from beneath the seven blond hairs that straggled over his upper lip:

"But, dear Collin, where was the necessity of your going to the baths for that? You might have accomplished the same thing here, with less inconvenience and without cost."

"How? if I may ask," queried the solicitor.

"Why, through the agents, my dear friend!" laughingly replied the little count.

Baron Branco raised his head and cast a forbidding look at his *vis-à-vis*.

"Through which agents?" asked Herr von Collin, who seemed to become greatly interested in the matter.

"Oh, there are a great many here, and of different kinds," continued the little count, who did not observe Branco's forbidding look. "There are, for instance, the washerwomen, the servants, porters, and persons you owe money to. But the best and cheapest way for you to gain a good *parti* is to apply to——"

At this moment Baron Branco cast such a forbidding, almost threatening look at the little count, that the latter turned scarlet and broke off in the midst of his sentence.

The solicitor looked first at one and then at the other, and was at a loss what to make of it.

"Wouldn't you have the kindness to go on?" he finally appealed to the little count. "The best and cheapest way for me to gain a good *parti* is to apply to——"

The youth thus addressed, under the fierce gaze of the baron, again became mortally embarrassed, tried to regain his self-possession, and then stammered out, while crushing his huge cigar in his fingers:

"Oh, nothing. I only wanted to tell you how a cousin of mine once got a rich wife. One day, after dining at the Hotel Rome with some friends, he casually said to the porter on leaving: 'Say, my friend, don't you know of a rich wife for me? Would like to marry soon, so as to be able to pay my little debts.' The porter replied that he did not know of any just then, but that he would speak with his friend, the steward, and inform the gentleman of the result. No sooner promised than done. The porter spoke with the steward, whose wife let out rooms, and she arranged the *parti* with the gracious mamma and the young lady. This is the way my cousin got a rich wife!"

"And the daughter believed that your cousin married her for love?" asked the baron, who seemed to become interested in the story since the diversion from the subject first spoken of.

"Of courthe!" lisped the little count, "and the mother too."

"And the way in which the young man approached the subject excited no suspicion in her mind?"

"Not the least. She was even disposed to excuse it, on the score that in the higher circles there is often no other resource."

A slight smile of satisfaction played about the lips of the baron, and again he sank his noble head upon his breast and lapsed into thought, while Solicitor von Collin looked upon the little count with a good deal of distrust, who, on his part, appeared inexpressibly pleased.

The sun was sinking fast; the human stream that was welling out of the dark-green Potsdam street became thicker and denser, the various restaurants became filled up more and more with people, and the dusk of twilight began to spread over the city.

"When I get into as tight a fix as my cousin was, I will do as he did," said the little count, after a long silence. "Already I have commenced to sever my relations with certain parties, because one must be free from old entanglements before he gets into new ones."

The handsome baron started up from his pleasant reverie and again cast such a sinister glance at the little count, that the latter again became dreadfully embarrassed and turned scarlet.

"Who is that fine-looking man riding across the bridge, there?" asked Solicitor von Collin. "I have seldom seen a finer-looking man than he is on horseback."

"That is Legation Counsellor von Frohberg," answered the little count, "a brother of Freiherr von Frohberg, who has a most charming wife. That, too, is one of the *partis* which the——"

"Please let me have a light, count," interrupted Branco, taking a cigarette out of an elegant case.

The little man was terribly startled by the sudden and vehement manner with which the baron, who had been silent for so long a time, addressed him, and he hastily tendered him his crushed and cold cigar-stump. The baron grasped it quickly and applied it to his cigarette, which he began to suck and draw with all his might; but he failed to ignite it. Suddenly it occurred to him to look at the stump and see whether it was burning or not, and, on finding that it was dead, he threw it angrily over the bannister.

"Oh!" instantly exclaimed someone below upon the sidewalk.

"What is the matter?" asked the baron, angrily, without however stirring from his seat for the purpose of seeing what had happened below.

"You struck an old man in the eye with that horrible cigar-stump you threw away," said Government Solicitor von Collin, looking over the bannister down upon the sidewalk. "There he stands with his handkerchief applied to his injured eye."

Baron Branco now leisurely got up from his seat and looked down upon the person alluded to; but no sooner did he catch a glimpse of the individual than his dark and sinister countenance cleared up as if by magic, and he burst out laughing.

"A funny-looking old man he is; he only looks old when seen in a certain position; by a better light you would take him for a school-boy. In reality he is a very good-natured youth, and one of the most attentive members of our club; he is very sedate, considering who he associates with. Don't be angry, old fellow!" he called to the person still standing on the sidewalk. "It was a mere accident. How was I to know that you would be coming toward me when I threw away my friend Nöhre's cigar-stump?"

"Ah, was it cold?" asked the person below, hesitatingly and in a timid voice.

"As cold as your heart!" returned the baron, viciously, who seemed to derive enjoyment from the accident that befel the new-comer, and whom he was disposed to make a butt off. "But come up here and permit your friends to greet you and introduce our new member to you, who has not yet had the honor of forming your acquaintance."

It was not long before a young man was seen walking through the garden, who, on account of

his smooth, youthful face, would have been taken for a school-boy, if his clothes had not been both stylish and quaint in the extreme.

Upon his blonde head he balanced a faultlessly stylish, high silk hat, but which was too small for him, and he was consequently obliged to walk as if he was stepping on eggs, for rapid motion would surely have caused it to topple over; his very tight and very high collar was encircled by a gorgeously colored scarf, which had become badly displaced and was visible in greater part both in front and behind; a very tight and very short jacket, of excellent material and stylish cut, was made to answer the part of a coat, and his very short and tight trousers barely reached to his ankles, and appeared as if they had been sewn on his lower extremities; one hand was covered with a faultlessly fitting, fashionably colored glove, and his feet were encased in brand new, brilliantly glossy, patent leather shoes.

"Is that the same gentleman who stood on the walk a little while ago?" whispered Government Solicitor von Collin to the baron.

"The same," the latter whispered back; "he is now seen in another light, that is all; and that changes his appearance entirely, and makes him look fifty years younger."

The new-comer now ascended the steps; he was visibly embarrassed, and he felt uncomfortable, which conditions became worse when he beheld the smiling countenances of the three gentlemen present, one of whom being a total stranger to him.

"Will the gentlemen permit me to introduce them?" said Baron Branco, who was disposed to be amusing at another's expense, with a courtly waive of his hand, pointing to the youngest mem-

ber of the club. "The Herr Government Solicitor von Collin."

The latter rose from his seat, bowed politely to the new-comer, who stood there, bowing repeatedly and profoundly, waiting for the baron to pronounce his name next.

Branco, however, suddenly seemed to become greatly embarrassed, rubbed his forehead with his right hand, as if to stimulate his memory, then shrugged his shoulders, as if to say it is impossible for him to do it, and finally turned apologetically to the new-comer, from whose injured eye the tears ran in a stream, and upon whose forehead the perspiration stood in beads, and who was growing more and more embarrassed by the inexplicable conduct of the baron.

"Pray excuse me, my old friend," said Branco; "I sometimes forget names, and just now am totally unable to recall your worthy name. Please tell me what it is."

The youth with the gorgeous scarf and short trousers became so confused at being thus addressed by the baron, that he left off rubbing his sore eye and began to wipe his sound visual organ, constantly looking around as if in the hope of getting assistance from some quarter.

But he seemed to be doomed to disappointment, for the little count, as usual, continued to smile agreeably, without displaying the least intention of opening his small, pointed mouth; and the solicitor, who certainly was unable to assist him, patiently stood in an attentive attitude, and waited with lively anxiety for the introduction to come to an end.

"Please have the kindness to tell me," said the baron to the youth with the very short jacket; "Herr von Collin is exceedingly anxious to learn your name."

The blond youth with the fashionably colored gloves and brilliantly lustrous patent leathers, who had by this time rubbed his sound eye so much that it too was tearful, and his face looked tear-stained and besmeared, now cast his hazy glances upon the baron beseechingly, that he might recall the forgotten name; but everything seemed to be in vain, for the latter once more rubbed his forehead and once more shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"Wouldn't you have the kindness to tell *me* your worthy name?" appealed the barrister courteously to the youth with the badly-fitting, glossy silk hat. "Surely, *you* haven't forgotten your name!"

The young gentleman seemed to have formed a mighty resolve; his face assumed a painfully sad but noble expression, he tried to smile agreeably, bowed politely toward the solicitor, drew a full and long breath, like one who is about to make a desperate dash, and, with a heroic resolve to do and to die, ejaculated:

"My name is ——." And then he stopped, pinched together spasmodically his tearfully stained eyes, opened his mouth, and uttered a sound that cannot be expressed in words.

Branco and Nöhre were scarcely able to suppress their laughter, and Solicitor von Collin looked as if he had heard something very singular which he did not understand; he, therefore said, with the utmost respect:

"What? I did not catch the name. May I ask you to repeat it?"

The youth with the short trousers became still more confused, and a cold perspiration broke out upon his countenance, then he spasmodically compressed his eyelids again, distorted his face, clinched his hands, gave his whole body a violent jerk, and uttered:

"My name is ——," and then, after a moment's silence, followed a word that sounded like an Englishman saying "Wau-wau."

The baron and the little count were now unable to restrain themselves, and therefore burst out with a loud guffaw, while the barrister looked sheepish, and the youth with the short trousers drew a long breath of relief, as if a load had been taken off his breast.

"Delighted to form your acquaintance," said Herr von Collin, bowing politely, "though I must candidly confess that I do not even now know what your name is."

"His name is Rarrer," said the baron, coming to the young man's relief, "but unfortunately he is unable to pronounce the letter R, which recurs four times in his name, and he is therefore unable to pronounce it distinctly."

The solicitor bowed once more to his new acquaintance, and the latter again drew a sigh of relief and dried his forehead and eyes.

"Why do you wear such short trousers, Rarrer?" asked the baron, laughingly, casting a glance at the youth's lower extremities.

"Yes, this is anothah instance of misfowtune that can happen to me only," replied the young man. "I have my clothes made by the best tailoh in Bevline, and yet I nevah get pvopah fitting gahments. This is the fouwth paiah I have veceived fwom him this week, and none of them fit me; evevy paiah he sends me is showtah than the last, and if I were to have anotheh paiah made they might only weach to my knees."

"Then, why don't you go to another man," asked the solicitor.

"That would do me no good, Hevv von Collin," replied Rarrer, sitting down. "It is not the fault of the tailoh, but my misfowtune. The same is

twue of my coat that I said in vefewence to my twousehes. I may have my clothes made wheah I will, I nevah get good fitting gahments. I was bohn unfohtunate."

The solicitor smiled doubtingly.

"Fact, I assure you," added the baron. "Our poor friend Rarrer can't put his nose out of doors without meeting with some petty accident. It is really remarkable."

"Yes, it is weally wemarkable," affirmed Rarrer, taking a cigar from an elegant case and attempting to ignite it with a fancifully constructed patent cigar-lighter.

But no matter how hard he tried he succeeded no better in lighting his cigar than the baron did a little while before with the count's cold butt.

"Can't you light it?" asked the barrister.

"No," replied the youth, throwing away the cigar, "the blasted thing will not buhn. This is the fifth I have thwon away to-day, though my man assuahed me that it is the best impohted bwand of cigahs."

"May I offer you one of mine," asked Solicitor von Collin, kindly tendering him his cigar-case; "mine all draw well."

"You are weally wevy kind," returned Rarrer, taking one and again bringing forth his fancy apparatus for lighting his cigar.

Nowithstanding his best efforts, and no matter how hard he sucked and pulled at his cigar, he failed utterly to ignite it.

"Really, this is very extraordinary," said the barrister. "This is the first one out of the whole box that will not burn."

"And pwobably also the last one," added the unfortunate youth, abandoning all further efforts; "and I must be the pevson to get it. Heah you

have another pwoof of my misfowtune. I am vevy fond of a good cigah, but seldom am able to enjoy a comfovtable smoke."

"Under such unfavorable circumstances, I wonder you haven't become a hermit," said Government Solicitor von Collin, seemingly becoming interested in his new acquaintance.

"I have weapeatedly thought of becoming one," replied the unfortunate youth, sadly; "but it would do me no good. If I weah to wetweat to some fah away deseht, a thwiving city would soon spwing up awound me, you may depend upon it. My misfowtunes are gweateh than those of any pevson I evah heared tell of. I have twavelled all thwough Euwope, but saw scahcely anything; for wheah evah I came to it always wained, and when I weturned home the sun came out bwight and glowious, as if to tantalize me. You may believe it or not, but I am pevhaps the only pevson who could get no oystahs in Hambuhg, no Holland cheese in Wo—ottehdam, no Bw—bwaunswick sausages in Bw—bwaunswick, and no caviah in Wu—wussia. I was six weeks upon the Wi—wigi, and obtained no view because it was waining and cloudy; but as soon as I came down the sun bvoke forth bwight and glowious. How can one enjoy twavelling under such civcumstances? And then you mustn't forget my misfowtune that I can't pwonounce an Aw."

"What is that?" asked Collin, vaguely.

"The lettah Aw," forcibly ejaculated Rarrer, his whole body undergoing spasmodic contortions.

"Oh, the letter R," said von Collin, good-humoredly; "but that really is no misfortune, it is only a slight inconvenience."

"Oh, yes, it is moah than a slight inconvenience," said Rarrer. "Do you think it is agweeable to one to be jeehed and dewided constantly when one

speaks, and to suffeh the gweatest embavvassment when he has to pwonounce his name? Ah, if I had such a pwetty name as youahs, Collin! Not once does that hovvible Aw occuah in it! You have no idea how much I suffeh fwom it. My life is litewally made a buwden to me!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Collin, sympathetically.

"As I tell you," affirmed Rarrer. "I was once in love—I ought watheh say I loved. Unfowtunately, the name of my adoweahd began with that howible lettah, and when I used to say to heh, 'Deah Wo—wosie,' instead of 'Deah Wo—wosie," she would laugh at me, and finally got a dislike foh me, and we pahted. That is the way with the gwiles. She liked me well enough at fivst, and was willing to mawy me; but because I was unable to ahticulate one lettah out of the whole alphabet hev love foh me melted like the snow in the sunshine. I have since given up all thoughts of mawying, and the gwiles have no attwaction foh me. When one considers how thoughtlessly and wecklessly they entah the bonds of matwimony, it is not suvpwising that so few mavviages tuhn out happy."

"No man of any pretensions marries nowadays with the object of being happy, but to extend his dynasty and increase his fortune," interjected the little count, assuming a distinguished bearing, but which only made him look all the more puny and ridiculous.

"Or in order to get sufficient means to pay his early debts, and thus be able to live in peace," observed the solicitor.

Rarrer was lost in thought.

"It is a pity," he said at last, "that love and matwimony in ouah times have lost all theah poetvy."

"How so, my friend?" asked the little count.

"You must not look upon love and marriage as one and the same thing. Love may be enjoyed before marriage, and after one has loved sufficiently he marries, and thus in a manner becomes settled. And what more can the women ask when they get a husband who has worn his horns off, and who is now quiet and behaves himself in an examplary manner?"

"While the women only now would like to begin to live," remarked Collin. "And thus we often see how her enjoyments conflict with the comfort of her husband, and even sometimes affect his honor."

"Because he has alveady enjoyed life to the utmost and his wife has seen vevy little of life," said Rarrer, thoughtfully; then he seemed all at once to become very serious, and added:

"May the fault be whosesoevah it is, it is a fact, that mavviages ah nowadays awanged by pavents, velations, oh some unauthovized individuals, in such a manneh as to make one feel disgusted, and excite his pity for the pooh deluded cveatuhs."

"Why, Rarrer, what is the matter with you today?" laughed the baron. "You have assumed quite a new rôle, or, as you say, 'wole.' You speak with more feeling upon this matter than anyone would have thought you capable of."

This jest of the baron, which reminded the young man with the tight coat of his former unfortunate love affair, acted like a damper upon his conversational powers, and embarrassed him so much that he thoughtlessly seized the count's glass of ale, carried it to his mouth, and took a big draught at it.

"Like it?" asked the count, agreeably, when Rarrer had put the glass down again.

"Hovvible stuff," replied the latter; "I hope I don't get the cholewa fwom this wetched beah. Evevything is possible to one so unfovtunate as I am."

Just then an equipage drove over the Potsdam bridge and turned to the right, along the Schönberger strand.

"Is not that the banker Silverstein, with his daughter?" asked Collin.

"Yes," answered the little count. "There is a very good *parti* for you, my friend."

"Yes, but who wants to mark his descendants with those oriental noses?" said the baron, with a contemptuous curl of his aristocratic lips. "Jew is Jew," says Nathan the Wise, in the "Knight Templar."

"And money is money," added the little count. "The Christians, and especially the nobility, have borrowed so much money, and so often, from the Jews, that they are now ready to *take* the daughters plus their money, so as not to be obliged to pay any interest on the debts."

Instead of answering, the baron curled his aristocratic lip still more contemptuously. Just then another equipage rolled over the Potsdam bridge and turned to the left, and presently came rolling by the Café Mielens.

"Ah!" exclaimed the baron, lowly, seemingly unpleasantly affected.

"Ah!" exclaimed the little count also, whose pointed face became irradiated with a broad smile.

Government Solicitor von Collin first looked at one gentleman and then at the other, greatly surprised, and then at the carriage, which at that moment was abreast of the Café Mielens.

As if he had been struck by lightning, the little count jumped off his chair and saluted the occupant of the carriage with an amount of deference bordering on servility. Not exactly as if struck by lightning, but still quickly, the handsome baron, too, rose from his chair and made his obeisance with

seeming nonchalance, but still deferentially, to the same person, while Rarrer's brow became angrily contracted, his hands clinched, and his right leg was jerked out forward with a spasm, as if to kick somebody or something that was offensive to him.

In the carriage was seated a rather showily-dressed lady, in whose hat was a plume of costly feathers which undulated like waving bushes in a breeze, and her florid face wore an amiable and patronizing expression; about her mouth there played an air of evident grief because she must be silent and not be permitted to indulge in a constant flow of agreeable conversation, for which she seemed predestined.

While the equipage was passing the club, and Branco, the little count, and Solicitor von Collin were still gazing after the undulating plume, a fearful canine yelp was heard behind them, followed by a human cry of horror; then came a terrible racket, and next a dull thud as of a heavy body falling on the floor.

The three gentlemen quickly looked around, frightened.

The little white table was kicked over against the balustrade, and Branco's cup of coffee and the little count's glass of beer were upset and had rolled off, the coffee and the beer running down in black and brown streams to the sidewalk below, where the utensils had already landed; at a little distance away the bulldog sat on his haunches, with an inexpressible amount of pain on his canine countenance, trying to lick the abbreviated stump of a tail that he still possessed; and below, near the head of the small steps, lay Rarrer upon his back, holding his legs with the short trousers, which were now still shorter, extended in the air like a pair of telegraph poles.

Almost at the same moment there was heard from below an angry, rough, martial base voice that threateningly helloed at the three gentlemen on the veranda.

"Thunder and lightning! What do you mean by such conduct as that? How dare you pour coffee and beer upon the new hat of an old soldier? And my good coat is also totally ruined! But, my fine gentlemen, you shall suffer for this as sure as I am Major Rumpel, an honorably retired soldier!"

"But, my dear Herr Major," replied the little count from above, "in the first place, it was not done intentionally, and secondly, none of us three did it."

"What?" cried the major, bracing his right ear with his hand, because he was very hard of hearing. "Do you mean to use insulting terms to me, Major Rumpel, an old soldier who served all through the wars? You shall be sorry for that."

Thus saying, he motioned to a gendarme who had hurried to the spot to learn the cause of the disturbance, to follow him, and rushed up to the place occupied by the club.

"It was one of these three," cried the old warrior to the gendarme, rushing toward the young men, full of anger, with his eyes directed upon the group.

"Oh! thunder and lightning!" he cried, suddenly stopping and clapping his hands upon his abdomen. "Who has kicked me in the stomach?"

He now looked down and saw Rarrer, who, fearing the approach of the angry major, had dropped his elevated legs with the intention of rising from the floor, and in so doing they accidentally came in contact with the latter's stomach, as he was about to ascend to the veranda steps.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed the major again. "This is altogether too much! Who are you, and why don't you rise?"

A chill seemed to run through the body of the young man on being asked what his name was; he shut his eyes tightly, distorted his face terribly, opened his mouth as wide as possible, and made an indescribable attempt to utter something, but emitted no sound.

"Sir! do you also dare to make faces at me?" cried the old soldier. "I am Major Rumpel; who are you, sir?"

Beads of perspiration gathered upon Rarrer's brow. "My name is —," he groaned; and then he paused as usual for a few seconds, and in order to be able to pronounce the fatal word as plainly as possible, he opened his mouth to draw a full inspiration; but during this act he sucked in a fly, which forthwith set up such a degree of tickling and irritation in his throat that he began to sneeze and cough at the same time.

"What did the fellow say? What is his name?" cried the deaf major. "Tell me again, I didn't understand you well!"

"But, my deah Majov Wu—Wumpel," cried Rarrer into the soldier's ear, while the expression of severe pain still lingered in his countenance, "pevmit me to tell you——"

"Sir!" thundered the latter, mad from anger, "my name is not Wu-wumpel, but Rumpel! You are a thoroughly bad man! First you lie on your back and kick me in the stomach, then you make faces at me, and wind up by ridiculing my honorable name! No doubt it was you who poured the beer and the coffee upon me. Tell me, was it you?"

"But, my most honoved majov——"

Poor Rarrer was just about to pronounce the name of his antagonist in his own way, but fortunately succeeded in restraining himself in time;

with an effort he swallowed the dreaded word that was upon the tip of his tongue, and then continued:

"I did not intentionally pouah beah oah coffee on you noah kick you; I happened to see somebody suddenly wide by heah who fwightened me, and accidentally I twod on the tail of that dog, a thing that could only happen to one so unfovtunate as I am, considewing how showet it is; for that the bwut bit me in the leg, the pain caused me to jump off my chaiah, and in my haste to get away I fell and accidentally upset the table with the wevefshments upon it, which, to my gweat gwiff, wun down upon youah gawements."

The unfortunate youth with the wounded leg and short trousers had poured out his excuses into the major's ear so loudly and so forcibly that the latter almost understood everything the former had said to him, and in spite of himself had to smile at the chain of unfortunate circumstances.

"Well, since that is the case, apologize to me in the presence of these gentlemen, and that will end the matter!" said the old warrior, assuming a most dignified attitude.

"I most we-wespectfully ask youah pahdon, my deah Majov Wu-wumpel," said Rarrer.

"Rumpel!" cried the major, again becoming fiery red from anger.

"Wu-wumpel!" spasmodically ejaculated Rarrer, also turning red from the effort to utter it distinctly.

"Rrrrumpel!"

"Wu-wu-wu-wumpel!"

"Sir!" thundered the major, furious, advancing a step toward the poor, utterly demoralized youth.

"He is unable to pronounce the letter R, Herr Major," at last said the baron, in explanation.

"Why did you not tell me that before?" cried the major. "I would have spared myself a good

deal of useless annoyance, and been in my club by this time. Good day, gentlemen!"

Thus saying, he raised his right hand to his hat as a military salute, turned upon his heel, and rapidly left the veranda, followed in silence by the gendarme.

"Heah you have anotheah contwibution to my unfovtunate histowy," said Rarrer, endeavoring to clean his stylish but very short and tight clothes from dust and dirt. "You will admit now that such things can happen to me only."

"No matter, I was immensely amused," said Branco, heartlessly. "I'll leave you now; I think I'll go to the theatre this evening."

"Me too," lisped the little count. "It is the only way one can spend an evening pleasantly."

"Not I. I think I have had theatah enough foah to-night," murmured Rarrer. "I'll get into a dwoschki and wide home, so that no moah accidents befall me."

He took leave of the other gentlemen and walked over the bridge, for the purpose of getting a droschki.

"Tell me," said Government Solicitor von Collin, lowly, to the little count, as Baron Branco, lost in thought, was walking on ahead, "who was the lady that rode by a little while ago, and whom you greeted so respectfully?"

"That was Madame Baldrian, the relict of Commercial Counsellor Baldrian," whispered back the little count, looking very serious; then he added, "She owns an elegant villa in Potsdam, but spends most of her time in Berlin."

"Indeed!" said von Collin, involuntary assuming a very serious expression of countenance.

But, after a brief silence, he added:

"But who and what is she?"

"Don't you know her?" the little Count Nöhre asked, greatly surprised.

"No," replied the barrister. "Wouldn't you tell me——"

The baron, who was walking on ahead, now seemed to become suspicious of the conversation that was going on between the two gentlemen behind him, and he slackened his pace somewhat.

"I cannot tell you anything more at present," whispered the count, who evidently noticed that the baron was lagging in his steps, with some alarm. "Call on her and pay your respects to her."

"I should call on her and pay my respects to her—but under what pretence?" asked the solicitor, surprised.

"Under no pretence whatever, my dear friend."

"But does she know——"

"She knows you and knows everything."

"She knows me and knows everything!" repeated the barrister, still more astonished.

"Yes," said the little count. "I will tell you nothing more now than that you should go to her. She is the woman you need!"

The solicitor shook his head, evidently unable to comprehend the little count.

"Will you come along to the theatre, Herr von Collin?" asked the baron, now turning to him.

"No," said he. "I will leave you here, gentlemen. Adieu!"

"Adieu!" returned the others. "Shall we see you at the Café Mielens, to-morrow?"

"Most probably."

They had walked along together a short distance, and were just about to separate, when they noticed a droschki coming from the opposite direction. As the vehicle was abreast of them, and about to turn the corner, the occupant leaned out slightly from the low, open carriage, for the purpose of saluting them; that caused his hat to topple off his

head, and in his endeavor to recover it, added to a sudden lurch of the vehicle, he suddenly, to their great horror, tumbled out of it, landing, almost at their feet, upon the strip of grass that separates the sidewalk from the roadway.

"Rarrer!" exclaimed the baron. "What, in the name of all that is strange, are you trying to do? Are you trying to break your neck?"

"No!" answered the unfortunate youth. "I am not twying to bweak my neck, but I feah I will come to an untimely end by the cavelessness of one of these dwivehs. Such an accident as this, I will ventuah to say, nevah befoah happened in Bevlin!"

Rarrer's elegant coat was completely ripped open in the back, and, in his generally demoralized condition, presented such a comical appearance, that the baron burst out laughing.

"But for you, Rarrer," he said, "I'd become a confirmed hypochondriac; you always make me laugh. But I think you had better take him home," he said, turning to the little count, "lest some unheard-of misadventure overtakes him."

The good-natured little count offered his services to the unfortunate, and they parted.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD GENTLEMEN'S CLUB.

The Old Gentlemen held their headquarters in the Café Boulevard, opposite the Café Mielens.

This afternoons-association, when it mustered its full strength, numbered between twenty-five and thirty members, and consisted exclusively of men who had already passed their seventieth birthday, and had fought in the war for independence; many of them were decorated with the black and white ribbon of the Iron Cross.

There are, on the whole, very few persons of seventy and over who did not participate in that ever-memorable war; for all the youths that were not then ill or crippled joined the ranks in defence of the Fatherland.

Most of the distinguished warriors bore honorable names and high-sounding titles, but those who saw them and knew not their history, would have taken them for plain citizens in their everyday costumes, so modest—indeed, more than modest—was their appearance.

It was just the reverse with them from what it was in the case of the young men in Café Mielens opposite. The latter presented a showy outward appearance, while the old gentlemen had all their good qualities within them, in their hearts and in their minds.

These here were of the Past, those across the way were the Present. How will our Future look?

The mere thought of marriage is apt to disgust one, for who would care to beget a generation feebler,

more mercenary, more blasé than those men of the Café Mielens.

And those we became acquainted with are not the worst that may be found. We want to spare our friends a description of them, for we do not wish to excite repugnance, but only pity, and in fact to pity with laughing lips.

We would picture persons who may yet be improved, who have not yet given up hope.

The others we would leave in darkness and forgetfulness; they deserve no better fate.

It is a remarkable time, in which we live!

Old age shrugs its shoulders at youth; and youth curls its lips contemptuously at old age.

They do not understand each other—that is the reason why the sons learn nothing from the fathers, that is the reason why the fathers so seldom act justly toward the sons.

Coming generations, however, are the ones to judge the good and the bad qualities of both, and tell their and the following generations who was just, and who was unjust.

The object must be removed to a proper distance from the eye to be seen clearly. If it is too near it becomes blurred and indistinct.

Youth curls its lips contemptuously at old age; indeed, it laughs at him, even to his face.

How foolish for one to laugh at a thing he does not understand, especially if he has not even taken the trouble to understand it!

When one beholds such a vain creature, does it not seem as if he was laughing at himself? And that the contempt of such a being cannot affect old age?

But it does affect him! though he is unfortunate enough already to see his former fine and strong person wilt and droop, like his beautiful

and noble spirit! though he is unfortunate enough to feel more and more isolated, as every year goes by, from the new time which he does not understand, and by which he is not understood, in which he is like a blade of grass which the reaper has overlooked, and in which he looks to death with fear and longing at the same time!

He still lives merely in the remembrance of the olden times, which he understood, in which he labored and was useful; now he does not live any more, he merely dreams, as the body dreams before eternal sleep comes.

Old age, with its faults and foibles, can only seem laughable to uncultivated minds and evil hearts; a feeling soul pities it.

We must regard a fine, crumbling human ruin with the same silent sorrow as the ruin of a once proud castle, that speaks so intelligently, in poetic language, of a fine old time that is gone by.

But then, one must understand the dumb language of the old structure, which is like the incoherent mutterings of the dotard, otherwise one is apt to laugh at something he shouldn't laugh at.

Like the young men at the Café Mielens, the Old Gentlemen had their regular places upon the veranda, behind the railing, at the Café Boulevard, only more secluded and hidden by the foliage that covered the arbor.

Youth shows and obtrudes itself everywhere, old age hides and withdraws itself quite as much.

This arbor, which was somewhat retired, was selected partly because many of the old gentlemen were unable to hear plainly. Old age and the thunder of the cannon of the French wars had considerably dulled their organ of hearing. They were, therefore, compelled to carry on their conversation in a loud voice, and it would have been

disagreeable to the aged gentlemen to be overheard by the new times, which did not understand what they were relating to each other, and which they themselves only understood.

Most of these old military men, after they had been retired from the army, removed to Berlin, where most of the pensioned soldiers, as a rule, drift to. The majority of them left the places that knew them in all their glory—where they had commanded a regiment, a brigade, division, or perhaps even an army corps—in order to end their days here.

In the places where they were once the first, where they walked decorated with their brilliant orders, so that people stopped to look at them in wonder as they passed by, there they did not like to step down from their throne of earthly greatness, there they did not like to walk about in an unattractive civilian coat, and be unappreciated like a fallen star.

That is the reason why they emigrated to Berlin, where they disappeared in the great mass of people, where nothing more is expected from "His Excellency the General" "retired" than from any other person, and where they are not obliged to expend much from the little income they have.

For, although the pension they receive may sound big, yet many things have to be purchased with it, many old debts have to be paid for luxuries enjoyed in former and early years of the subaltern life.

And then a family has grown up in the course of years, the sons desire some addition to their small pay, the daughters desire to dress well and show themselves in society, in order to get married; all this costs money, a great deal of money, and therefore "His Excellency the General" is often obliged to live three or four flights high, in a modest apart-

ment, and in a very economical manner, often reflecting a good deal whether he can afford to get a new coat or have the old one cleaned and pressed.

The once proud and brilliant officers are not recognized now in the plain and modest-looking persons who take their exercise along the canal, and then enter their club in Café Boulevard for the purpose of drinking a cup of coffee, smoke a cigar, talk of old times, tell old stories over again, and which their comrades only understand.

And even if the conversation now and then lags or ceases entirely, it does not matter. They then sit and dream, and mumble, and smile to themselves, and nod with their white heads, so that it does one good to behold them.

Their spirits have then gone back to the olden times, and they enact the old scenes over again so actively that their old hearts again become warm, and their old cheeks again become flushed, as in the days of their youth.

Some of the old officers return to their old nests after they have been retired, desiring to end their days where they began their brilliant career.

But, as said, these form the exception; those good old souls must be able to find poetry in customary things, and be well able to bear *ennui*.

Punctuality is a most praiseworthy and happy quality. Every soldier is imbued with it, for it is the basis of his life and action.

Very few, or no civilians, especially civil officers, are punctual; the latter are slow and irregular, and never execute their functions with that promptness and quickness characteristic of the soldier. Even the merchant is sometimes apt to procrastinate and delay.

The punctual man often suffers great annoyances, because he is punctual; for, if he is prompt to keep

an engagement, according to his ideas, he is generally too early according to the other party's ideas, and that is as bad as being too late.

The soldier takes his military promptness with him into his civil life, which, in fact, is only expressed by the civilian coat; the inner man remains the soldier as before.

Promptly at the stroke of two of the clock in the steeple of St. Matthew's Church, one of the old gentlemen after the other might be seen toddling along the canal leading toward the Café Boulevard, where they generally arrived all at once, for the one that was late a minute or two was called to account for it, and chaffed the whole afternoon.

The first one to arrive regularly, day after day, was General von Hufnagel. He usually reached the club a quarter of an hour earlier than the rest, for the purpose of receiving the other members with a joke or some good story, which he generally repeated several times during the afternoon.

Let us cast a glance into the retired arbor, covered with the broad leaves of the wild vine that already are turning brown with the autumn sun's rays, and hide the old gentlemen from the profane gaze of modern times, whose animated current of humanity, now near and then again remotely, beats against the arbor, like the waves of the sea that roar and surge against the isolated, crumbling rock, till they have undermined its base and it tumbles down into the depths, to disappear forever from view. Like the club of the young gentlemen, the club of the old gentlemen was now reduced to a few members only.

Many had gone away, on account of the heat of the summer, to visit their children or relations, where they remained long enough to save the cost of the journey, and even a little more. For, how-

ever bad mathematicians the military gentlemen are in their youth, in old age they become very good ones.

Mathematics is the most difficult of all sciences; it is only fully understood later in life.

In the arbor, where there was room for about twenty persons, there were only four present to-day; these were all that remained faithful to the domestic hearth and old habit, simply because they had no opportunity to be unfaithful to it.

At one end of a long table sat silently the president of the association, General von Hufnagel, an old but still active man with very thin white hair, a healthy-looking face, and lively eye, that frequently wandered about searchingly, as if to find a weak point that would afford him some fun.

To the right of the general sat an old, dried up and shrivelled little man, who seemed to be at least eighty years of age. He was almost totally bald, his face was so furrowed by wrinkles that not a smooth spot could be found in it, and the toothless jaws were clamped together, so that his chin almost touched his nose.

The old man's clothes were of the cheapest kind, and his coat had evidently been renovated and pressed again for this season; his trousers certainly might have been a couple of inches longer, the colored kerchief which was wound around his neck was old and faded, and his shirt-bosom was considerably frayed but clean.

And for all that this man once had a fine and imposing figure, was decorated with the large ribbon of a great order, was a dashing rider, commanded a whole army corps, and thousands were ready to obey his thundering voice; for he was Se. Excellency, Lieutenant-General von Drang, at one time one of the bravest and most active officers of

the whole army, but now a shrunken up body, a mere bundle of bones, in which only a dim and confused memory still lingered.

Generally he was silent, would sit as if lost in thought, or dreaming, and only at certain points of the conversation would his mummy-like face show any animation, and in his dim eye a spark of remembrance would glisten for a moment, and then, as if he had received some poignant thrust, he would begin, with trembling lips, to relate a story, which, however, he never finished, relapsing into his usual apathetic condition before reaching the end.

To the left of General von Hufnagel sat Riding Master von Drehhan, an old officer whose whiskers and mustaches were snow-white, who, on account of disability, had to retire from service very early, but now, as is usually the case, never could talk enough of the good old times and of himself, and how bad everything and everybody are nowadays.

To the left of the riding master sat Colonel von Krull, another old man, who looked as if he was constantly preparing himself to make a pun, and was only waiting for an opportune moment to pass it off on his associates.

These were the only members of the club of the "old gentlemen" who met this afternoon for the purpose of enjoying each other's society.

The waiter brought a cup of coffee, a miniature pitcher with cream, and four lumps of sugar in a small saucer, for each gentleman, received pay from each in turn, and then withdrew.

Barely were these things placed before each of them, when they all at once, as if by command, reached for the sugar with their right hands, dropped two of the pieces into the steaming coffee, causing bubbles to sputter in the air, and the other two they slyly transferred to their vest pockets.

Every time they went through this last act they looked around stealthily and anxiously, lest anyone should have seen them do it, though everyone of them knew that the rest did it.

Such open secrets often occur in life, everyone sees them, but no one likes to speak of them.

After the coffee was duly stirred and the sugar dissolved, General von Hufnagel, as president, suddenly became very serious, plunged his hand into the deep pocket of his somewhat threadbare coat, and presently produced a long object wrapped in a piece of newspaper. Forthwith, the others made very serious faces, they too produced long objects wrapped in pieces of newspapers, which, after carefully unpacking, proved to be cigars, and which to the youth of to-day would cause a shudder, for they were either too yellow or too black, and undoubtedly were the odds and ends of a stock which the manufacturer was glad to get rid of for any amount.

After the pieces of newspapers were carefully folded up and put back again into the respective breast pockets, the cigars were taken up and subjected to a thorough kneading and rolling with the hands and fingers; next they were thoroughly moistened with the lips and tongue; and after the tips were cut off, each gentleman produced a long knitting-needle from his pocket, which he rammed through his cigar like a gunner swabbing a cannon.

Notwithstanding all these preparations, the too yellow, or too black, things would not burn, and the smokers consumed lots of matches in order to keep their cigars lit, and the odor they diffused reminded one more of the smell of gunpowder than of Havana tobacco.

"Now we are all right!" began General von Hufnagel, perseveringly puffing at his long roll of what was supposed to be tobacco, but failed to get

any smoke. "Tell us some news, my dear Riding Master von Drehhahn!"

"I am glad I have nothing new to relate, Herr General," returned the person addressed, twisting his thick, white mustache; "we belong to the good old times and don't suit the new. I hate the newspapers like sin. They fight and quarrel continually among themselves, and each one blows its own horn, each one claims to be the biggest newspaper in the world, and each one wants things done its own way, as if his Majesty the Emperor had nothing to say. And, in the end, they only do that for money—to get as many subscribers and advertisers as possible. None of them give anything away, either; they are a mercenary set, and have too much freedom, entirely. They don't know what it is to respect authority. Such obedience as we were taught is the best form of government, all others are dangerous and full of evil!"

"Yes, indeed; it was altogether different at the time you commanded a squadron, my dear Drehhahn," laughingly said the general, a slight smile of mockery playing about his lips. He had a faint knowledge of the new times, but did not love it, because he had been expelled from it.

"I should think so," said the riding master. "Why, almost anyone can be chief of squadron nowadays! Promotion is so rapid that it is impossible for a man to acquire the necessary amount of knowledge to be a leader and commander. In my time, one rode in the ranks for twenty-five years, and then he was rewarded with the golden cross and promoted to a lieutenancy; and when one finally got the command of a squadron, he was able to ride properly, I assure you."

"I believe you, my dear Drehhahn," said old Hufnagel, bowing pleasantly to him.

"But nowadays the young fellows imbibe the military sciences with their mother's milk," he continued; "when I am so unfortunate as to get into a conversation with a lieutenant of modern times, I become dumb in half an hour, and am unable to say a word. But I have a clear conception," he added, nodding his head forcibly; "I saw the new times coming, and I shook the dust off my feet before it arrived. Otherwise I would have been lieutenant-general, and been addressed as Se. Excellency!"

At the word "excellency," the shrivelled up, old General von Drang, started as if he had been stabbed, his dim eyes glowed for a moment, and he smiled most agreeably and graciously, as was his custom in the days of his splendor and greatness.

"Yes, that was a very nice affair, my friends," he commenced, with the imposing air that was his wont, as his memory carried him back. "At the time I was commanding general, I gave a very large ball. One of my division commanders, was invited, and he, being afflicted with an unusual degree of absent-mindedness, claimed that the ball took place at his house, and welcomed my guests, who were greatly annoyed thereat, and feared that they had made a mistake. My wife and I, of course, at first were greatly amused by it, and allowed him to keep it up for some time, but, after a while, I concluded that the matter had gone far enough, and I stepped up to the general and said to him, seriously——"

At this point the old lieutenant-general ceased talking audibly, but evidently continued mentally, for he nodded with his head repeatedly and his lips moved, and finally he made a most dignified bow, as if taking leave of the person he had been addressing.

When the old lieutenant-general commenced to speak, the others assumed a look as serious as if they were in a church, and retained this attitude till he had taken leave of his imaginary division-general, and relapsed into his impotent state.

"Thunder and lightning! What horrible cigars somebody is smoking here," said the grouty voice of some passer-by, and which was distinctly heard within the arbor.

Riding Master von Drehhahn made a wry face, and peered through the thick leaves of wild vines that covered the arbor, out upon the street.

"I thought so," he said, turning to his comrades; "it was a lieutenant of the new times. One is no longer even able to smoke his cigar without these pampered young fellows taking offence at it."

"You used to smoke a cheap cigar, my dear Drehhahn," remarked General von Hufnagel, ironically.

The riding master with the bushy whiskers made no reply, but after a little while continued:

"The whole generation is like that, without exception. Recently my son, who has been wearing epaulets for a couple of years only, spent an evening with us. I offered him one of my cigars, but hardly had he lit it when he made an awful face, and seriously said to me: 'Look here, papa, such bad cigars as you smoke, fortunately, one gets only in a single house in the whole city of Berlin!' 'Where?' I asked, partly angrily, partly inquisitively."

"Yes, that is what I would like to know, too!" von Hufnagel said, who seemed to derive considerable pleasure from the story.

"By General von Hufnagel!" smirkingly answered the old riding master, under his thick white mustache. "Now what do you say to such boys?"

The old general made a wry face and washed down his vexation with a mouthful of coffee, and the riding master, having thus paid off his friend in his own coin, continued:

"Really, I don't know what will become of these young fellows! Nothing is good enough for them, and when we tell them how it was in our time, we run the risk of being laughed at by them. It is the same with everything else as with the cigars. In our time one used to smoke a plain, honest pipe, and one hardly ever had more than one pipe. If a friend dropped in, one would take the pipe out of his mouth, wipe off the tip, and hand it to him with the words, 'Here, take a smoke!' and he would take the pipe and smoke away quite contentedly, and feel that one was very friendly and sociable to him. When my boy comes home and I dress myself to take a walk with him, he will examine slightingly my coat, trousers, and scarf, and ironically inquire how long I have already worn each garment. But I tell him the articles may be old, but they have been paid for, and that is more than everybody can say!"

"Serve him right," said General von Hufnagel, who was still vexed at the young Drehhahn on account of the allusion to his cigars. "Yes, yes, it is a bad and spoiled time; it was, indeed, altogether different in our younger days."

"In our younger days it was altogether different." said his excellency, the old general, who started once more, as if he had been stabbed, whereupon the others became serious and attentive, and assumed their church-going faces. "In our younger days it was altogether different. At thirteen years of age I fought in the disastrous battle of Jena, and as our army was afterward reduced, I returned home and looked after matters and things on the farm. I had

but one suit of clothes, and it was not long before the left sleeve of my coat was worn through by the musket-strap, and my boots, too, had big holes in them, although they had been made of the toughest leather. When we had visitors, I would twist the worn-out sleeve so that the torn part was turned inward and couldn't be seen, and the places where the stocking peered through the holes in the boots I painted black with ink. My sisters had but one cotton gown apiece, which soon was worn through and was patched behind, and for that reason they always manœuvred to face a body, and walked out of the room backward. But for all that they got good and brave husbands. Both of them became engaged in the patched cotton gowns, which subsequently, I found, had been made over to fit the young ones. I was glad to see that, and I said to my sister: 'My dear Matilda,' said I——"

Here the old lieutenant-general stopped talking audibly, but continued to nod his head and move his lips, as if he was still conversing with his sister in spirit; but after a while he became motionless and lapsed into his customary dreamy attitude.

"Yes, indeed, those were different times," continued the riding master, the everlasting subject. "I, too, spent my youth on a farm, and when my brother and I received the privilege of going on a visit to some neighbor, we would be placed side by side in the sleigh, and were both wrapped in one old French dragoon cloak. One of us put his right arm into one sleeve of the big cloak and the other put his left arm into the other sleeve, and then the cloak was buttoned in front of us both, and we looked like a big barrel with two heads sticking out above. Try and do such a thing with the young men of to-day; how they would look at you!"

"What has become of Rumpel to-day?" said

General von Hufnagel, looking at the chair usually occupied by the absent member. "He was always punctuality itself."

Hardly had General von Hufnagel made this observation when Colonel von Krull, who had not yet spoken a single word, and only kept making faces, as if he was preparing himself to say something very funny, braced himself up and cleared his throat energetically.

The riding master and the general instantly looked at him.

"Now we will hear that old joke about the punch," the latter whispered into the ear of his excellency the old general.

The latter waked up from his dream, smiled benignantly, and also looked at Colonel von Krull, who seemingly felt pleased with his own thoughts, for he braced himself up, cleared his throat anew, and then said:

"I propose that Major Rumpel be fined the punch for the members for being late!"

"Agreed!" was the unanimous response.

"But it must be good, otherwise I will not drink it!" continued the colonel.

"Nor I! nor I!" chimed in the others.

And then followed a long and animated discussion regarding the ingredients necessary for the composition and manner of brewing a bowl of punch, and where it should be drunk, though each of them knew very well that it would never be brewed nor drunk.

This was the famous punch joke of Colonel von Krull, which he made day after day, and concerning which, day after day, a heated debate ensued.

The old gentlemen got intoxicated in anticipation of a delight which they knew they would never enjoy.

Barely was the subject started by Colonel von Krull disposed of, when the missing Major Rumpel plunged upon the balcony like a bombshell, causing his excellency the old general to start up, frightened out of his dream, and with injured dignity to look up at the noisy comer.

"Please excuse me, gentlemen," panted the major, taking the cup of coffee from the waiter who followed close upon his heels, so as to make up for lost time and catch up with the others. "I would not have been late to-day if a slight accident had not happened to me on the way here."

"Oh!" exclaimed General von Hufnagel, while Rumpel in his hurry slipped the little cream-pot into his vest-pocket instead of the two lumps of sugar, and made a great effort to pierce his cigar with the teaspoon.

"Hey!" cried Rumpel, extending his best ear toward the general.

"I merely said 'Oh!'" yelled the latter over the table.

"You ask how?" returned Rumpel, his breast still panting. "As if almost anyone is not liable to meet with an accident!"

"Oh, of course, of course," smiled the general.

"No, not a horse; but a young man was the cause, and it happened close by here, near the Café Mielens."

"On the street?" cried the general, who seemed to be amused by the affair, while Riding Master von Drehhahn blew the smoke from his cigar through his thick, white, bushy mustache, so that it looked like the smoke of a kiln escaping through the woods.

"Yes, with his feet!" returned the major, absent-mindedly stirring the coffee with his long cigar, having dropped the spoon upon the floor in his

excitement. "I'll tell you all about it," he said, moving his chair closer to the old general.

"That will do!" cried the old general, moving his chair away a little.

"Yes, I'll move closer to you," answered Rumpel, moving his chair nearer. "I know you want to have me near you, so that you may hear me better!"

"Why, it isn't I who am deaf!" replied the old general, cuttingly, jerking his chair away forcibly.

Just then such a loud hawking noise was heard, as if someone was clearing his throat for the purpose of speaking, that they all looked at the old colonel quickly.

"Why, you have already made your joke about the bowl of punch to-day!" said Riding Master von Drehhahn.

"I know it," groaned the colonel, making a wry face.

"Then, what do you want to repeat it for?" asked the riding master.

"I don't want to repeat it," groaned the colonel. "I only wanted to say to Herr General von Hufnagel that he has placed a leg of his chair upon my foot. Had you not interrupted me, I would have told him of it long ago."

"Oh!" said the riding master, while the general took the obnoxious chair off the old gentleman's foot. "How was one to know that you wanted to say anything else but your joke about the bowl of punch?"

"You see," began Major Rumpel, having succeeded in compressing the general between himself and the old Colonel von Krull, "I was coming along my usual way from my house hither, and was just abreast the railing of Café Mielens, when all at once some warm liquid ran down over my right cheek, and some cold down over my left, fol-

lowed by a beer-mug, coffee-cup, and saucer. Involuntarily I looked up and saw a table upset, from which the liquids and dishes had rolled off.

"Seeing several parties at both sides of the upset table," continued the old major, "who seemed to be greatly amused at my mishap, I naturally got very angry, and told the young men what I thought of their conduct. They excused themselves by saying that they had not done it, but I made short work of the matter—I called a police officer, and, with the undaunted courage for which I was known in the service, charged upon those who had dared to insult me."

Major Rumpel had now worked himself up to such a pitch of excitement, that his pock-marked face actually glowed; and the jet-black dyed hair of his head and bushy whiskers stood up like the quills of a porcupine. Anyone seeing the old artillery officer for the first time in this state, would have been awed by him, for his face expressed vehemence, determination, and fearless bravery.

"With my eyes firmly directed upon my enemy, who had not yet vacated his place upon the balcony, I pushed on," continued the major, "when suddenly I received a violent blow in the region of my stomach."

The old major accompanied the lively description of his misadventure with energetic gestures of both hands, and now began to rub the injured part of his anatomy with his dexter member; but suddenly he stopped, opened his mouth and eyes to their fullest extent, his face assumed an expression of terrible fear and anxiety, and in the greatest alarm he exclaimed, pointing to a hard substance over his stomach:

"See what a lump has already formed from that accursed blow. I knew I was badly hurt."

Everyone looked at the spot indicated, which the major still continued to examine with the utmost concern.

"That may not amount to much," consolingly said Riding Master von Drehhahn; "why, it seems the abscess has broken open already; you need apprehend no more danger from it."

Major Rumpel looked at the spot where he was struck, and actually saw two creamy-white streams running down over his trousers.

"I never had anything like this happen to me in all my life!" exclaimed the old artillery officer, spasmodically tearing open his waistcoat, and then cautiously examining the injured spot with his hand.

But he seemed not yet to have reached the end of the surprises that were in store for him; his face assumed a puzzled expression, and, in a voice hoarse with excitement, he exclaimed:

"I am utterly nonplussed; the boil is gone!"

"Look here, major, you are trying to play off some kind of trick on us," laughingly said General von Hufnagel. "If I am not mistaken, you have, by some slight of hand, transferred the boil into your vest-pocket."

Old Rumpel became furious at the speaker.

"In my present position I most decidedly object to anyone, no matter who, attempting to jest with me," he exclaimed. "You know, Herr General, that there is no one on this earth for whom I have the least fear."

"Softly, softly, my good friend," pacifyingly said the old general. "Just you look first, and don't try to swallow one, body and soul, for making a harmless suggestion. Please examine your vest-pocket."

Although Rumpel was still at a loss what to make of the matter, nevertheless he did as the

general suggested, and he looked bewildered when he extracted the little cream-jug from his pocket, which still contained a few drops of milky fluid.

"Why, major," laughed the general and the other gentlemen, lustily, "what tricks are you trying to play off on us to-day? You are not generally given to practising such tomfoolery."

Major Rumpel was still speechless.

"I don't know how it got there," he said, finally, looking bewildered; "I give you my word for it that I haven't the least idea how this happened."

"Well, perhaps it will occur to you by and by," said Riding Master von Drehhahn. "Tell us, for the present, the rest of your adventure."

"Well," began the major, directly, with his customary liveliness, "let me see, where was I? Oh, yes. I was suddenly struck in the abdomen, which, as we now know, produced no boil, but a cream-pot. On perceiving the pain, I looked down, and to my great surprise I saw a young man with remarkably short trousers lying upon his back, with his feet high up in the air, nursing one of his legs. It was this young man's feet that struck me. Of course I got very angry at him, compelled him to rise, and asked him to tell me with whom I had the honor of dealing. The young fellow became greatly embarrassed, opened his mouth, made an awful face, and uttered sounds which no one could comprehend, especially I, who am not blest with the best of hearing."

"Well, I should say so!" said the old general, ironically.

"No, I did not slay him," returned Major Rumpel, "for after wrangling with the young man for some time, I found that he had no intention of insulting me, and that he was somewhat touched in the head. Moreover, I think he suffers from fits.

I am sorry for him, for he seems to be a good-natured fellow."

"Is this all there is to it?" asked General von Hufnagel.

"No, I will not call him out for it," returned the major; "I do not want to kill him so long as he does not kick me in the stomach again."

After completing the story of his adventures Major Rumpel's gaze again became riveted upon the little cream-pot that now stood on the table before him, and he seemed to be profoundly engaged in fathoming the mystery how it got into his vest-pocket.

Several times he shook his head as if he was still unable to find a solution to the problem; his gaze wandered, and his fingers unconsciously searched for something in his pocket. Suddenly a light seemed to have penetrated into his obscured mind, and his finger and thumb actively began to search for some missing object in his vest-pocket, and soon the ray of light diffused itself over his whole face. His looks were first directed upon the little saucer, and then upon his coffee, which, in his excitement, he had not yet tasted.

Suddenly he seized the cup of coffee, carried it to his mouth, and took a big draught.

Barely, however, had he taken a swallow when he hastily replaced the cup upon the table, rolled his eyes upward, made a frightful face, and uttered groans as if he were choking.

"You wish to show us the grimaces which that poor half-witted fellow made in the Café Mielens, when you asked him what his name was, hey?" laughingly inquired the general.

Major Rumpel now turned blue in the face and groaned fearfully.

"Bravo! How well you imitate him," exclaimed

the riding master. "I had no idea you were such a good mimic, major!"

"Look here, this is getting to be serious. I really think he is choking!" said the old general. "There is something sticking in his throat which he is unable to expel. Let us help him quickly, otherwise he may choke to death!"

The two old gentlemen hastily got up, and while one pummelled the major on the back with his fist, the other thrust a long bony finger into his mouth and scooped out a big, macerated, unrecognizable mass.

"I have it!" cried the riding master, throwing the lump he had extracted from the major's throat upon the table, and looking at it with the utmost astonishment. "What in the name of Heaven were you trying to do?" he said, turning to the major. "You do some very queer things to-day. First, you put the cream-jug into your vest-pocket, and then you try to swallow your cigar."

The major gradually recovered from his suffocating condition, but looked sorrowful and distressed, nodded with his head, and, in a weak, hoarse voice, said:

"I know the whole mystery now. The young man at the Café Mielens is to blame for it all. I dread him, and I fear he will exercise a baneful influence over my life. At any rate, I will not pass that unlucky railing again, but choose a different course from my house thither. That, in itself, is a disturbance of my old habit which is sure to affect my well-being unpleasantly."

"But why is the young man to blame for everything?" asked the general.

"Don't you see why? If the young man had not caused me those mishaps I would have come to our club in an undisturbed state of mind, and not

been late—the first time it has occurred to me in my life. As I said, I see it all clearly now. In place of the two lumps of sugar I put the little cream-pot into my vest-pocket, in my absent-mindedness and excitement, and used my cigar in place of the spoon to stir my coffee with, and was just about to taste it to see whether I had put two or four pieces of sugar in it, when the horrid cigar swam into my mouth and came near choking me."

"Well, well, compose yourself, my dear major," said the general, soothingly. "Everything has passed off happily, and you can look upon the whole matter as a comical affair, which you will often relate to our common amusement."

Major Rumpel shook his head seriously.

"I will never relate it, general," he replied, "on the contrary, I'll try my best to forget it," And after a long, thoughtful silence, he added:

"I wish that I hadn't met that young man with the short trousers. He will bring me bad luck, I am sure of it!"

The old general and the riding master endeavored, by relating incidents from their camp life, in which his excellency participated in his usual manner, to bring the major back to his former state of mind, in which they only partly succeeded. Presently an equipage drove by, which raised a terrible cloud of dust that was wafted into the arbor occupied by the old soldiers.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed the old riding master, puffing into the cloud of dust and then looking out into the street, between the leaves that covered the arbor. "Ah!" he exclaimed, as he recognized the occupant of the carriage. "No wonder. She raises a dust wherever she goes, and breeds mischief wherever she comes. She is a regular old she-devil!"

"Who was it?" asked General von Hufnagel.

"Madame Baldrian," answered the riding master, pronouncing the name with ineffable disgust.

"She may go to the d—l!" exclaimed the general. "Heaven grant that she never crosses my threshold."

"Who is this woman whom you gentlemen dread so much?" asked Major Rumpel grimly, looking after the carriage.

"Don't you know that Baldrian woman?" queried Riding Master von Drehhahn.

"No," returned old Rumpel, who had now regained his former military brusqueness. "How should I know her? I have very few female acquaintances anyway, nor do I want to become acquainted with any more members of this weak and insignificant sex. But this Madame Baldrian, I never even heard of."

At the mention of this name, the old excellency started as if he had again been stabbed, for the somnolent expression of his face vanished, his eye became animated, and he spoke with the utmost positiveness and vehemence.

"That Madame Baldrian is one of the most shameless and dangerous women in the whole of Berlin, who does an indescribable amount of harm to many families, and renders a whole generation unhappy. If I had full authority I would cause her to be hung up to the first lamp-post. She was once impudent enough to ring my door-bell, but when she sent in her name, I went out to her and said, "Look here, Madame Baldrian——"

Here the old lieutenant-general broke off in his statement to that lady, audibly, but evidently was still engaged in conversing with her in spirit, for his old head continued to nod for a long time, and the expression of his eye was so serious as to surprise Major Rumpel greatly, for he never had seen his excellency so affected before; at last he made a

profound bow, and it was evident that he had taken leave of the lady, for he relapsed into his habitual dreamy state.

The other gentlemen assumed a most respectful attitude and listened gravely, as was their custom whenever his excellency commenced to talk. The instant, therefore, the major opined that the old general had concluded his imaginary interview with the lady, he turned and asked, in a low voice:

"But tell me, why is such a dangerous person allowed to run about free in the city, and what crime has she committed? Is she a thief or a receiver of stolen goods?"

General von Hufnagel shook his head negatively.

"Worse than that," said he. "If I were to steal a valuable article from anyone he might buy another; if I were to rob him of a sum of money, he might be able to acquire it again. The loss can always be replaced and forgotten. But if a person destroys my heart in cold blood——"

"Don't talk so loud, Herr General," interrupted Riding Master von Drehhahn.

"Well, if I don't talk loud Rumpel will be unable to hear me," replied the general.

"But others will hear you, too," continued the riding master, "and that may cause trouble."

The general nodded affirmatively.

"What?" asked Rumpel, who had not heard the last words.

"Such matters should not be spoken so loud that everyone could hear them," shouted the riding master into his ear.

"But tell me, at least, what crime she has committed?" he said, appealing to the riding master.

"She has fixed that poor, unfortunate Frohberg, too," said General von Hufnagel, who seemed unable to drop the subject.

"Yes, poor fellow," said the riding master, pityingly. "His life is poisoned, though he himself may not yet be aware of it. But the dose was large enough. He may either suffer for a long time from it, or be suddenly annihilated by it."

Major Rumpel, who had braced up both his ears with his hands in order to hear better, turned as pale as a ghost.

"Horrible," he murmured between his teeth. "She administers poison?"

And then he ordered a small glass of brandy, something that never happened before, and drank it down in a gulp.

"Brr!" he ejaculated, shaking himself. "The fright went clean through me. I hope I don't dream of it at night. Such things make a terrible impression on my mind."

"Why, major, who would be afraid, and of a woman at that," said General von Hufnagel, laughingly.

"Who says I am afraid!" exclaimed Rumpel, making a belligerent face. "I simply detest such persons."

"You need have no fear for her; she will never attack you, nor try any of her arts upon you," continued General von Hufnagel.

"In what way?" asked the major. "You mean, I suppose, because I have no enemies through whom she may injure me?"

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it," returned the general. "Besides, she don't do it for money."

"What, then, is her object?" asked Rumpel.

"Simply pleasure; she seems to have a passion for it," returned the general.

"Simply for pleasure!" groaned old Rumpel, turning pale again. "God save me from her! I had no idea that such persons existed."

"You are altogether too unsophisticated, my dear major," said the riding master.

The major started as if he had been shot. "I am liable to be asphyxiated?" he cried, his hair standing on end, and his countenance assuming an expression of ghastly horror.

The riding master explained to him what he had said, and old Rumpel became somewhat calm again. For a while he was lost in thought, and then he turned to the general and asked:

"Why did you say, a while ago, that I have nothing to fear from that woman, and that she will never try her arts upon me? Is it because I have such a good stomach?"

"My dear major, the stomach has nothing to do with it," laughingly replied the general.

"No?" queried Rumpel, surprised. "How does she administer it, then?"

"I fear, my friend, the brandy you took a little while ago has confused you somewhat," said the general, laughing still more. "Let us talk of something else; this subject excites you altogether too much."

Major Rumpel, greatly alarmed by what he had heard of the terrible woman that was permitted to roam about Berlin and administer poison for the sake of pleasure to innocent people, would have given a great deal to learn more about her, of whose existence he had no knowledge till this moment; but then, on the other hand, he was too proud to display so much weakness; he therefore summoned all the resolution he was capable of for the purpose of regaining his former self-possession.

Having lit a cigar, which this time he bored with a knitting-needle instead of a teaspoon, he was about to relate some event of his military life, when the riding master intercepted him with the question:

"Where do you get your knitting-needle, my dear major, seeing you are not a married man?"

The old major assumed a demeanor of inexpressible pride.

"No, sir, I am not married!" said he, with inimitable dignity, "and I consider this act as one of the bravest of my whole military career."

"How so?" asked General von Hufnagel. "In reality, it is not an act, but an omission, and it is not an evidence of courage, but of the very opposite. You were afraid of the women and of matrimony, and for that reason kept away from them."

"No, sir," returned Rumpel, fiercely twisting his jet-black mustache; "I was too proud to bend my manly neck to the whims and absurdities of a wife, and make myself ridiculous before the world. I, a military officer who was a veritable despot upon the drill-ground, could never submit myself to become a slave to a woman at home; for all married men, without exception, are slaves!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the general.

"Ha, ha!" laughed, a little less loudly, Riding Master von Drehhahn.

"He, he!" croaked Colonel von Krull.

All present looked at the latter.

"Do you want to make your pun about the punch, colonel?" asked General von Hufnagel.

The colonel shook his head negatively.

"All married men are slaves; I maintain that I am right," continued the major, who gradually was regaining his martial brusqueness. "Men who in the field carried batteries by storm, tremble like children at the least wrinkle upon the brows of their wives."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the general again.

"Ha, ha!" laughed, a little less loudly, Riding Master von Drehhahn, like an echo of the general.

"He, he!" croaked Colonel von Krull once more.

All present, out of sheer habit, looked at the latter again.

"Has anyone placed the leg of his chair upon your foot?" asked the riding master.

"No, I want to make my punch-joke," returned the colonel, with a most cunning little smile.

"Well, then, make it, but be quick about it!" said General von Hufnagel.

"When our mutual friend, Major Rumpel, gets married, he will have to brew us a bowl of punch; but it must be made of the best wine, otherwise I will not drink any of it!"

"Agreed!" cried the others, with the exception of the major, who looked upon the matter with an expression of disgust upon his face.

"Yes, if that event should occur, or when the heavens fall, which is just about as likely to happen, you gentlemen shall have the best bowl of punch that has been given as long as our club exists!" said he.

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed the others.

"But please don't indulge in any delusive hopes," added the major, incisively; "for in fact you insult me, if you think that I will ever renounce my free and independent life to become a weak servant of a woman, as all of you, gentlemen, are. Excuse me for the remark."

"Major, you are becoming insulting now!" said General von Hufnagel. "I, at least, do not answer to the picture which you have drawn of the married man."

Just then the clock in the steeple of St. Matthew's Church struck six, and barely was the sound of the first stroke wafted through the air, when his excellency started as if he had been shot, he rose from his seat, buttoned up his light summer coat, took his crooked cane from the corner, hurriedly

bid the rest adieu, left the garden as fast as his thin legs could carry him, and disappeared in Potsdam Street to the right.

Simultaneously Riding Master von Drehhahn and Colonel Krull also left their seats and rushed away as if mad, or as if the two were racing each other. Major Rumpel, however, remained quietly, and strove to keep his cigar a-light; and the general also retained his place, though his legs twitched perceptibly, and a restlessness which he was barely capable of suppressing permeated his entire system.

"Partly, you were right, my dear major," cried the general, breathing hurriedly, and with an unsteady voice. "There they go, or rather run, the married cripples, because they have to be home precisely at 6.30; otherwise there would be a terrible scene. Ha! ha! What henpecked creatures they are!"

"What made the gentlemen run away?" asked Major Rumpel, who, being still occupied with his cigar, did not understand a word the general had said.

"But just look at me," the latter continued, becoming more and more restless, while his legs trembled. "Here I sit as calmly and indifferently as if I had no woman at home."

"The gentlemen are afraid of that bad woman?" queried the major, again becoming alarmed.

"No, the clock has just struck six!" explained the general, scarcely able to stand it any longer.

"Ah, they are afraid they'll get in a bad fix!" gravely said the major.

The perspiration began to gather in large drops upon the general's forehead.

He jumped off his chair, placed his mouth close to the major's ear, and shouted:

"The—clock—has—just—struck—six!"

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed the major, a shiver running through him as if a wasp had stung him. "Are you in earnest, general?"

"Yes," roared the latter, "they are running home, for fear they will be late and be scolded by their dear wives."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the major, contemptuously, also jumping off his seat.

"But I am an exception to the rule, as you see," continued the general, whose face was already livid; "your description of the henpecked husband was not applicable to me; I am no slave of a woman!"

"Bravo!" cried Major Rumpel, whose face, too, was turning red.

"I am just as calm and independent as you are, who can still boast of being a free bachelor," cried General von Hufnagel.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Major Rumpel, making a face from which it was impossible to say whether he was proud or apprehensive.

The general pulled out his watch, and stealthily cast a glance upon it.

He drew up his right leg spasmodically, and cast a glance at the major, as if he would hurl him with his eyes over the canal, while the major's countenance gradually assumed an expression of silent anxiety and provocation.

"Major!" finally growled the general, after both had remained immovable for a short time.

"Well!" replied the latter, a spasmodic tremor running through his whole system.

"I must go to the Potsdam railway station," cried the general, being struck by a happy thought. "I expect an old friend to arrive."

"Me too!" cried Rumpel, instantly catching at the saving idea.

"You too?" asked the general, frightened.

"Yes, to be sure!" affirmed the major.

"At the Potsdam railway station?"

"No, at the Silesian," cried the major, on instant reflection.

General von Hufnagel drew a sigh of relief.

"Then fare you well, old friend," said he, pressing the major's hand. "Hope to see you to-morrow at the club."

The major mechanically expressed a similar hope regarding his friend, and then both started off in different directions.

"It was high time," murmured General von Hufnagel, when he found himself in Potsdam Street. "If I go by way of the narrow lane, I may yet get home before half-past six o'clock. Thunder! If I should be late, I will get another one of those fine curtain lectures from my wife."

And barely did he reach the narrow lane alluded to when he snatched his hat from his head, and started off on a run that soon made him pant and gasp like a porpoise.

"I would have been in a nice fix if that tiresome general had detained me any longer!" murmured old Rumpel as soon as he had turned his back upon his associate. "My housekeeper would have jawed me to death if I had been a minute late."

And then he started off at a double-quick, so that his jet-black dyed whiskers streamed backward in the wind, and enveloped his head as if with a veil.

CHAPTER IV.

AUTUMN STORMS.

In an elegantly and tastefully appointed apartment a gentleman walked up and down with quick and restless strides.

His name was Karl von Frohberg, a gentleman of means and leisure, and brother of Legation Counsellor Herman von Frohberg, whose hasty acquaintance we have already made, as he was riding across the bridge and was the subject of some remarks by the members of the Young Gentlemen's Club at the the Café Mielens.

Karl von Frohberg was the owner of one of the finest estates in Silesia, but soon after he married his beautiful wife took up his residence in Berlin. The young wife, who before her marriage was a poor girl, and had had but few opportunities of enjoying any social pleasures, found life in the country too quiet and monotonous, and readily prevailed upon her husband, who loved her above everything, to in remove to the capital.

How can one refuse anything to a lovable wife the honeymoon ?

Even if Annie von Frohberg had asked anything of her husband to-day, six years after their marriage, her request would have been granted as readily and with the same loving, though somewhat heavy, heart.

Herr von Frohberg seemed to be a man of upward of forty-five years, and although he would not have been deemed handsome, still his appearance made such a favorable impression and awakened

so much confidence that one was instantly attracted to him.

His hairs were already sparse and his body inclined to obesity, but his frank and kindly expression of countenance, coupled with the faithful and trusting look of his clear eyes, were of such a nature, that he who valued true and genuine human nature would have overlooked everything else.

Now, however, his usually serene countenance was overcast by a veil of sorrow, and his saddened look was either cast down or directed toward the door with the impatience of one who longs for some one to come.

In this feverish and restless state Herr von Frohberg had been pacing his room for about a quarter of an hour, when the door was opened and an old man servant dressed in livery entered and respectfully announced:

"The Herr Privy Counsellor, Dr. Staberow!"

"Tell him to please come in!" cried Herr von Frohberg, joyfully; and barely did he utter these words when a gentleman rushed by the old servant, entered the room, and carefully closed the door.

"Good morning, Frohberg!" commenced the privy counsellor, immediately upon entering. "You sent for me—here I am. Show me your tongue, please. You don't want to? Your pulse, then. Not that either? Then, you are not ill? All the better. I needn't be detained. Good morning!"

After this short and practical speech the privy counsellor turned upon his heel and was about to leave as hastily as he came, when Frohberg seized him by the arm and almost forcibly detained him.

"Dear Staberow," said he, touchingly, "it is true I sent for you, but not for myself."

"On account of your wife?" asked the physician, quickly facing him.

Frohberg nodded sadly with his head, and Staberow's face assumed an expression which might have denoted either sympathy or ridicule.

"What ails the little woman?" asked he, flippantly. "If I don't err, I saw her in the theatre only a few days ago, and then she looked the very picture of health. I was almost carried away by her charms."

Frohberg grasped the physician's hand.

"No jests now, Staberow, in the name of the friendship of our youth," said he, beseechingly. "I know very well that you mean no harm, but jesting now is painful to me."

"Well, then, I'll be as serious as the science of medicine itself, whose disciple I am," returned the privy counsellor, suddenly assuming a totally different expression of countenance, and corrugating his brow as if preparing to make a very difficult diagnosis.

"For some time past my wife has been a source of considerable anxiety to me," said Frohberg.

"Hm!" ejaculated the doctor, putting the head of his cane to his lips. "No wonder. She has caused others many a pang, too. Science can do nothing for that. Why do you people marry? Why do you run after a handsome woman, as if the salvation of your soul depended upon your possessing her? Those that will not obey must suffer. The brief period of happiness is generally paid for by a long period of regret. During the first year the beauty that you have finally won keeps you in a state of blissful and silly delight; in the second or, at the latest, the third, when the passionate ardor has become somewhat cooled, the beauty begins to cause you anxiety. She is no longer the diamond of the heart, but only an article of luxury, which the thief wears and which the owner has the care of. As I said, against folly the

gods battle in vain, consequently the doctor too; one who is so foolish as to marry must bear the consequences of this contagious disease without murmuring. Once more, good morning!"

With these words, he made another attempt to leave, but once more was detained by Frohberg.

"Sit down, Staberow, and listen to me!" said the latter, pushing a chair toward the physician and taking a seat upon another.

"Heaven have mercy upon my soul!" groaned the doctor, but obeying his host's request. "More than one patient will get out of patience waiting for me! But I am ready to hear you."

"For the last six months," began Frohberg, "my wife manifested all the signs of excellent health; she has a good appetite and sleeps well, but the better she seems to external appearances, the more serious seems to be her mental state."

"Bon!" snorted the physician. "Proceed!"

"She is always moody and thinking," continued Frohberg, "and sometimes quite violent without any cause whatever."

"Has she a pug?" interrupted the doctor, suddenly facing his friend.

"What?" asked the other, surprised.

"Whether she has a pug?" repeated Staberow.

"No; but why?"

"Or a canary bird?" asked the privy counsellor, further.

"Yes; she has a canary bird," replied Frohberg.

"Then ascertain whether it is not dead," said Staberow. "These kind of deaths often cause a tender-hearted woman a great deal of grief."

"Staberow!" said Frohberg, a tear glistening in his eye, "can't you be serious even for a minute? Don't you see how much anxiety the matter causes me?"

The physician pressed his friend's hand in his, and the latter continued:

"You know my wife, Staberow. She was a charming, well brought up girl, and became an excellent wife and mother. I have enjoyed nearly six years of almost unalloyed bliss with her. But all this is changed now, and it came about as quickly as you turn your hand, for one fine morning I noticed this metamorphosis in her fully developed. The formerly tender, loving, and frank Annie assumed the demeanor of a victim. Her bearing denotes suffering and depression of spirits, as is evidenced by the abrupt, bitter expressions which now and then escape her."

"Well, is that all?" inquired the doctor.

"Oh, no!" went on Frohberg; "the symptoms just mentioned have of late become intensified. The discontentment with her position is greater and more bitterly expressed than ever. Me she calls a tyrant, and the children she considers a burden. Again, she complains that I am not sufficiently devoted to her, that I pay too much attention to, and care for, the children. Can you explain this?"

"Perhaps," said Staberow. "How old is your wife?"

"Nearly thirty years of age," replied Frohberg, hastily signalling his friend to break off their conversation, by putting his finger to his lips and pointing toward the door.

A minute later, and a tall, handsome woman, dressed for walking, entered the room.

She did not show that she was approaching the age of thirty, for the beautiful face displayed the smoothness and regularity of youth, and only her fine, dark eyes bore an expression of sadness that was unusual for such a fresh, animated countenance.

"Oh, you have a visitor," said the beautiful woman, in a voice expressive of unpleasant surprise.

"Pardon me, madame, it is only the doctor," said Staberow, with mock humility, rising from his chair. "You need not mind him."

Madame von Frohberg bowed slightly to the physician, and seemed undecided whether to go or stay.

"Do you intend to go out so early, Annie?" asked Frohberg of his wife, pleasantly.

"Probably!" she replied, throwing her head slightly backward, as is customary with women who are disposed to be displeased, yet have no cause to be so.

She then turned toward her husband, and asked with a slight, contemptuous curl of her lip:

"Have you become a star-gazer, too, in addition to your other famous accomplishments?"

"A star-gazer?" asked Frohberg, astonished. "What do you mean by that, child?"

"Why, you walked your room all night, and I presumed you were gazing at the stars," said the lady, with the demeanor of a cross-examiner.

"I was unable to sleep, and walked up and down my room a few times," returned Frohberg, calmly.

"A few times," repeated the lady, haughtily, who now evidently had found a cause to be displeased. "You walked your room for three full hours; but that is the way with the men—because they can't sleep, no one else ought to sleep. Besides, the wife has no rights which the husband is bound to respect."

Frohberg stealthily cast a significant glance at his friend, without replying to his wife's complaint.

The best way to avoid a family scene under such circumstances is, if one possesses sufficient self-control and determination, to remain passive. But, if

one is conscious of lacking that degree of resoluteness, it is best to leave the irritated individual to herself; for when the object that causes the irritation is removed, the disposition to feel provoked soon disappears too, and when in the course of an hour or two the husband rejoins her, she is likely to receive him with a grateful kiss for having nipped the quarrel in the bud.

As Madame von Frohberg found her first attack upon her husband fruitless, through his silence, she seized upon the state of the weather as a subject to find fault with.

"So you do not wish me to go out so early?" she asked her husband, after a long silence, throwing her head backward still more.

"I have not the least objection," he returned. "If it affords you any pleasure, you do perfectly right to go out."

"Pleasure!" cried the lady, with a disagreeable shrug of her pretty shoulders. "I only go out because it is necessary for me to do so. Women have not the same right as men to go out for pleasure."

"Shall I accompany you, dear Annie?" asked Frohberg, tenderly.

"No, thanks," returned the lady. "I do not want you to sacrifice yourself for my sake."

"But it is no sacrifice on my part to walk with you," said Frohberg.

"Do be still, and don't try to excuse yourself," Annie quickly interrupted. "A woman's heart cannot be deceived by such things. You neglect me in every way. You prefer to walk with our daughters than with me, because they remind you of my former good looks; but that is the way with all you husbands. After a year or two you tire of your choice, and seek diversion elsewhere."

"Oh, Annie," said Frohberg, taking her hand,

which she quickly pulled away; "what justifies you in talking so?"

The lady looked at him a long time, as if she would penetrate to the very bottom of his soul, and as if she would have been pleased to find the proof of his guilt there. But soon her eyes assumed a milder expression, she offered him her hand with a smile, and said, in a softer tone:

"Adieu, Karl!"

"Adieu, dear Annie," returned the happy husband, attempting to imprint a farewell kiss upon the full, rosy lips of his wife.

But scarcely had she divined his intention, when a slight, inexplicable tremor passed through her fine form; she recoiled, but in a moment controlled herself, hastily tendered him her hand, bowed slightly to the physician, and the next minute left the room.

Frohberg gazed upon his friend with a long, searching look.

"Well?" he asked at last.

The doctor seemed to have been startled from a deep, serious reverie, and he, in turn, looked at his friend a long while silently, probably because it was not yet clear to him what he should say.

"Well?" repeated Frohberg. "Do you know now the cause of this transformation?"

"Of course," returned the privy counsellor, though in his mind he was still apparently busy with a very weighty question.

"And what think you is the matter with her?"

"She suffers from autumn storms," replied Staberow, seizing refuge in the first thought that occurred to him.

"What, autumn storms?" asked Frohberg, astonished. "I never heard of such a disease."

"And yet it is a very common affliction," returned the doctor. "It is a disease of the mind,

and the best and purest women suffer from it. The affliction generally begins when the person is about thirty years of age, and, for that reason, I call it autumn storms. When a woman reaches this age she subjects herself to peculiar reflections, and critically examines her past and her present, whereby her vanity suffers. Especially do those women who truly and faithfully love their husbands, subject themselves to the reflections why the sweet tenderness that existed during the first years of their married life could not last forever. And the oftener they put this question to themselves, the longer they seek the solution of this problem, the more firmly this idea grows into their heads: that their husbands love them no longer as they did formerly: that their husbands neglect them, and consider them no longer pretty, because they are nearly thirty years old. The wife says to herself, 'when I become older he will deem me still less pretty, and, consequently, love me still less.' Thus reflecting, she becomes low-spirited and irritable, becomes jealous of everybody, even of her own children, and unfair, especially to her husband. Strange and undefined ideas pass through her mind. She finds fault with her husband because he does not love her as he did during the first years of married life; she cannot forgive him, and she seeks a way to punish him for it. She would like to draw him to herself, but repels him; she would like to prove to him that she is still beautiful and lovely, that others still appreciate what he doesn't; she would like to make him jealous; she forces herself to play the part of a coquette, which is altogether foreign to her; yes, she plays a dangerous game."

Frohberg paid the closest attention to the explanation given by his friend; he sank his head upon his breast when the latter stopped speaking,

and after a lengthy silence asked the doctor, anxiously looking him firmly in the eye:

"And is the disease dangerous?"

"In some cases it is, in others not," replied Staberow. "I have seen cases, in my practice, in which the patients lost their reason because of this fixed idea."

Frohberg turned pale, and wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead, while the physician cast a furtive glance of the deepest pity upon his friend.

"Is there no remedy for this disease?" he asked, after a long silence.

"Oh, yes," returned the privy counsellor, with a sigh. "There are remedies for everything except against death."

"What will you prescribe for her, my friend?"

"I will prescribe no remedies for her," returned the doctor, "but for you; the end must be gained by a counter-play."

"How?" asked Frohberg.

"By your remaining toward her just as you have been," replied Staberow. "You must take no notice of her humors, her whims, and her caprices. You must treat her with uniform kindness, love, and devotion. For heaven's sake, have no scenes, no war of words. The more violent she becomes, the calmer you must be, and when she accuses you unjustly, pretend not to have heard it. But with all this apparent unconcern and indifference on your part, keep your eyes open, watch her diligently, and report to me when you detect any new symptoms."

"Is her case serious?" asked Frohberg, trembling slightly.

"Not in the least," replied the privy counsellor, gradually regaining his customary good humor. "It is one of the mildest cases I ever saw, and she

will soon be all right again. Don't lose your courage and patience, old friend. If you do you are liable to aggravate the case by failing to carry out my instructions."

"You may depend on it, I will carry out your instructions to the letter," replied Frohberg, who scarcely required any admonition to obey implicitly the measures ordained for restoring to health the one being he loved dearer than life itself, and, like all good-natured and weak persons, he was ready to look at the brightest side of the picture presented to him.

"But when she complains that I do not love her as well as I did during the early years of our married life," began Frohberg anew, "she must desire to be loved by me just as ardently as in those days. And when she seeks to draw me to her, then she ought to reciprocate my love, don't you think so?"

"Why, that is plain enough," said the doctor.

"Then she only hides this love under a mask of irritability, sometimes even under one of opposition; is that it?"

"That is it!"

"And resorts to acts of unkindness for the purpose of attracting me toward her?"

"Yes, my friend."

"No harm can really ensue from true love, can it?" continued Frohberg, his kindly face again becoming joyfully irradiated. "This thought consoles and pacifies me. I look upon the whole thing as a mere display of childish peevishness and jealousy, which will soon be dissipated, and joy and happiness be restored between us."

Scarcely had the last words passed his lips, when the door was again opened, and Madame von Frohberg entered the room as rapidly as she had left it, a little while ago.

Did she suffer from the pangs of remorse, while in the open air, on account of her behavior toward her husband in the presence of another? Did her conscience smite her for it, or did she fear that the gentlemen would discuss and perhaps opine the cause that had changed her disposition? Who can tell?

"Annie!" joyfully exclaimed Frohberg, as he saw his wife enter.

The beautiful woman, from her short but presumably rapid walk in the open air, had become still more beautiful, her cheeks glowed with a rosy color, her eye sparkled, and its changeable expression denoted that a severe struggle, whose termination no one could foretell, was going on within her.

Immediately upon entering the room, she walked straight up to her joyfully excited husband, and tendered him her hand, which she had withdrawn from his but a little while ago.

"Dear Karl," said she, "forgive me for being so unkind to you a while ago. I did not sleep well last night, and I was very much excited."

"You need ask no forgiveness of me, my child," said Frohberg, forgetting all the doubts he had entertained and the instructions his friend had given him. "Everything is forgotten and forgiven when you smile upon me lovingly."

The beautiful woman seemed disposed to become cordial, perceiving how happy her husband seemed; but it was apparent that it cost her an effort to do so, and was not the free and natural prompting of her heart.

Much can be done by zealous efforts in most things, but not in love. The heart cannot be guided by instructions, it always acts independently —often against the cold teachings of reason and sound sense.

"I intended to visit a friend whom I had a vague and undefined longing to converse with," said Madame von Frohberg. "But on the way this desire to see her constantly diminished. I felt as if I was drawn back to my home, my husband, and children, by invisible hands; in the end I felt as if I really had nothing to communicate to my friend, or as if it would be better that she should not know what I——"

At these words Madame von Frohberg turned pale for fear that in her thoughtless excitement she had said more than she ought to have said; she was compelled to seat herself quickly to escape falling.

"My God, Annie, my life, what ails you?" cried Frohberg, hastening to her and removing her hat and wrap. "She faints, Staberow! Come here, quick! Help, for heaven's sake, help! She is dying!"

"Oh, no, she is not," said the privy counsellor, calmly, not even looking at the lady. "I must go now. I have a number of professional engagements."

"You want to go now, and leave me with my fainting wife, without helping her?" cried Frohberg. "If you are not disposed to act as a friend, you are at least in duty bound, as a physician, to relieve her. She is in a dead faint——"

"No, she has not fainted," interrupted the doctor, coolly; "it is only the effect of a temporary mental excitement."

"But how long is this terrible mental excitement likely to last?" asked the tortured husband. "Have you nothing in your science of medicine that will relieve her from it?"

"Oh, yes," said Staberow, smilingly.

"Then prescribe it! Why do you stand there so unconcernedly?"

"Very well, since you wish it," said the doctor, "though I would not have done it of my own account, for I would spare her the pain."

"Do you wish to bleed her?" asked Frohberg, anxiously.

"Oh, no," replied the privy counsellor, "I will not touch her, even."

Then he walked over to where the lady was sitting, with her eyes still shut, and said to her, in a low voice:

"The nervous system of my lady seems to be so seriously affected that I deem it absolutely necessary for her to retire to her country house in Silesia as quickly as possible. The city air is unwholesome, and the pure country air will soon restore her to health."

Scarcely had the doctor uttered these words when a slight tremor passed through her beautiful form, and she immediately opened her eyes, which she directed upon him with an expression of undisguised terror.

Herr von Frohberg looked astounded, first upon his wife and then upon the doctor.

"Has that caused her pain?" asked he.

"Her nervous system is very sensitive, and any disturbance is apt to occasion her painful feelings," replied the privy counsellor, "but they will not last long."

"How do you feel now, my beloved Annie," whispered Frohberg, tenderly, to his wife.

"Much better, thank you," answered the lady, with an effort attempting to rise and appear serene and unconcerned. "My God, you take everything too seriously, doctor. If you were to banish all the ladies who have a slight nervous attack from Berlin, the capital would soon be deserted. You entirely exaggerate my indisposition."

"That may be due to the fact that I had not a better opportunity of observing your case, not having the honor of being your attending physician," replied the privy counsellor, with a peculiar smile.

"I, too, think that you somewhat exaggerate my wife's illness," said Frohberg, directing a fascinated glance upon his wife, who, as if by magic, was apparently perfectly well again.

"Perhaps!" returned Staberow, sarcastically. "But even if I am mistaken, it is much better to err on the safe side. And a stay in the country cannot be otherwise than of the greatest benefit to your wife."

"What do you say, dear?" asked Frohberg, turning to his wife.

"Oh, how can you think of such a thing?" exclaimed Madame von Frohberg, who sought to mask her mental disturbance by apparent indifference. "How can you think of such a thing at this time of the year, and undergo the difficulties of removing to the country so late in the fall? The winter is close at hand, and although it is still warm here in Berlin, yet I would not like to shut myself in our old castle in Silesia. The mere thought of going to live there is enough to give me rheumatic pains."

"Yes, that is so. It is awfully damp in our old country house," said Frohberg, turning to his friend, readily coinciding with his wife. "I think the journey back and forth would do us more harm than good.

The privy counsellor shrugged his shoulders.

"It is possible, even probable, that I do not understand my lady's illness, though I flatter myself that I do. However, little or no benefit can be expected from treatment if the patient has no faith in the physician."

"You are a horrible man," jested the beautiful

lady, "but I sha'n't quarrel with you to-day, nor afford you any further opportunities of discovering additional bodily and mental diseases. It is late, I see, and it is time to dress for dinner."

Thus saying, she tendered her husband her hand, hastily grasped her hat and wrap, bowed slightly to the privy counsellor, and hurried from the room, at the door of which she once more pleasantly nodded to her husband.

But when she reached her own room, she dropped into a seat and commenced weeping.

Was the struggle that had just taken place within her decisive for good or for evil, and was she mourning over the battle which she had lost or won? Who can tell?

"A charming woman, isn't she?" said Frohberg to his friend, as soon as they were alone.

"Yes," assented the physician, distraught.

"She seems to have been cured of her illness as if by a miracle," the enchanted husband continued.

"Let us hope so," said Dr. Staberow, shrugging his shoulders. "At least it seems so, and with appearances one must often content himself in this imperfect world."

"My good wife was right, you are altogether unbearable to-day," said Frohberg; "but let us talk of something else now, and above all try and get back your customary good humor again, which was displeasing to me a while ago, but now would delight me."

"Very sorry," said the privy counsellor; "you made me melancholy, and therefore have committed a sin against your fellow-men."

"A sin!" exclaimed Frohberg, astonished.

"Yes, to be sure," continued Staberow; "in every house I shall visit now I'll appear with a gloomy countenance, which will cause well people

to become ill, and the ill to become still worse. The physician must always look pleasant; but do you think it is so easy for him to assume such a look, and keep it up indefinitely? It takes me a full hour every morning to arrange my face in pleasant wrinkles; and when they are once dispersed, I cannot regain them for that day."

"What?" asked Frohberg, surprised. "I always supposed you were enthusiastic for your profession, that your heart and mind were in your science, and that you practised it with delight and contentment."

"I was enthusiastic once," replied the privy counsellor, "but I am only so in appearance now."

"And what has caused the great transformation in you?"

"That irresistible power which brings about all transformations," replied Staberow, shyly, "namely, Time. The unfortunate arrangement of creation acts like an ungrateful child, it destroys everything created but itself."

"You have become hypochondriacal," said Frohberg; "I never expected it of you."

"I might say the same of you regarding certain things," replied Staberow, with a sad smile; "but in regard to hypochondria, everyone who has an enlightened mind is liable to suffer from it if he reflects upon his past and future. I certainly never heard of a hypochondriacal ass, have you?"

"My God, when I think how enthusiastic you were for your profession when you first began to practise," continued Frohberg, "how ardently you longed to become famous, and acquire the title of Herr Privy Counsellor! You have that title now; you are one of the most famous and busiest physicians of the city; but what has become of your love and enthusiasm for your calling?"

"Time has destroyed them," answered Staberow,

"as it destroys everything else—love, faithfulness, honesty, dutifulness, and all the other good qualities, whatever they may be called, to maintain which man has to battle his whole life long."

"I always thought that the physician would be the last to lose his love for his blessed calling," remarked Frohberg.

"Try it once!" cried the privy counsellor, warming up to his theme. "When I first began to practise medicine, I was really so enthusiastic about it that I was in danger of becoming somewhat daft. I had passed a brilliant examination, and carried off the first prize, the thought of which almost made me wild with joy. I rented an office, at a moderate rent, in a respectable locality, and put up a bright new sign: Dr. Staberow, Practising Physician. Office hours, 8 to 10 A.M. That was intended to mean that all the rest of the time I was obliged to ride about town, visiting my patients, though I then had neither any patients to visit nor any conveyance to ride in. I only possessed a good pair of legs and a good pair of thick-soled boots. On the next morning, after I put up my sign, I got up at five o'clock, and by six I was dressed. What an eternity it was for me to wait till eight o'clock, when my office hours would begin! At half-past seven I was tempted to look out of the window to see whether the people had already congregated in front of my house, and were disputing as to who among them had come first to consult me; but I was afraid it would not be becoming in me to do so. Thus I waited, in a state of inexpressible suspense, till eight o'clock. At the first stroke of the hour I expected to hear a violent tug at my office-bell, but everything was silent, silent as a churchyard! I scarcely dared to breathe, scarcely dared to walk into my room, for fear that the noise of my footsteps would drown

the sound of the bell; I sat close by the door and listened, but everything was silent, silent as a graveyard. Thus I sat till ten o'clock—a torturing eternity; not a soul called.

"I then went out, and was abashed at the people whom I met; for I thought that they must know that no one had called upon me. But where should I go? Not to visit any patients, but to seek some. But where was I to find any? Many of my professional friends drove by me haughtily and coldly, the proud privy counsellors had more patients than they could attend to, but I had not even one.

"During ten days no one came to my office, for ten days I ran about the streets like one crazy, and looked up at the buildings that were being erected, at all the scaffoldings that were being put up, in the hope that one of the workmen would be so kind as to topple down and break a leg, for my sake; I gazed after the carriages and riders, in the hope that someone would, to oblige me, allow himself to be run or rode over; but in vain, it was all in vain. I think during that time, when I was so unfortunate, not a single accident happened in the whole city of Berlin.

"Finally, I got such a mania to cure somebody, that I was often upon the point of knocking some passer-by down, or break some innocent person's head, in order to tender him my professional services, and have the pleasure of curing him.

"At last an old woman brought her cat to me, that had burned its paws. Things began to improve from that moment. One patient came after another, and I soon had a practice. I became quite renowned, and that again increased my practice constantly.

"Before two years had gone by I was able to buy a horse and carriage, and the physician who

rides in his carriage, as you know, is always patronized greatly. I was always busy, and became prosperous, and at last gained what I had so greatly longed for, the honor of being a privy counsellor."

"Well?" asked Frohberg, as his friend ceased talking.

"Right away," the latter rejoined; "I only wish to draw breath for a moment, then I'll be able to proceed with the sad tale.

"Since the time that the old woman brought her cat to me," he proceeded, after a brief silence, "many years have passed over us, and time has been constantly gnawing at our bodies as well as at our hearts. The best blossoms of my life have fallen a victim to it. I have enjoyed life, I cannot deny it, but I have worked very hard, for which I have received very little thanks.

"If you cure a patient of some grave disease, you may or may not receive the amount you claim for your services. If you are remunerated for your labor, the whole matter is settled, and the patient thinks there is no reason why he should be grateful to you. But if a patient dies under your care, then everybody is told that he was improperly treated, and you are forever condemned. As my preceptor used to say:

> 'God and the doctor, men alike adore,
> Just on the point of death and not before;
> The danger over, both are quite neglected,
> God is forgotten and the doctor slighted.'

"One asks himself what is the use of all this torture? For if you are taken away to-day, the world would go on just the same, since any person may be spared. Ah! if one could have only a certain number of patients! But this crowd, this constantly growing crowd of sick people—that kills

him who strives to keep the sick alive, robs him of his strength by day, and disturbs his rest at night—this mass is crushing him. I have no longer the tenacity and elasticity of youth; I have become old, and long for rest—at least, for a little rest. A man is only human, and whatever is too much is too much. The musician who gives fourteen music lessons a day at last becomes disgusted at the sight of a piano, and if you had to kiss your wife the whole day long, you would soon pray to heaven to accord you some other employment."

"Well, at last you are in good humor again!" laughingly said Frohberg.

"I told you once before," quickly retorted the privy counsellor, "that the doctor must be pleasant, will he, nill he; and his humor is often of the satanic kind. He must smile agreeably when an old woman shows him her foul tongue; and if, while extracting a splinter from a little brat's hand, he tears a handful of hair from your beard with the other, you are expected to be amiable, and even kiss it. I tell you, my friend, it is all vanity, everything is vanity in this world, and I merely torture myself for nothing."

"Why, I always supposed you to have a good income," said Frohberg.

"Yes, yes," returned Staberow, "I have a good income, but I have no time to enjoy it, and one wants rest when he grows old."

"How can you talk of being old," rejoined Frohberg. "You are still in your best years."

"I am past forty," said the physician, "and I yearn for the long deferred, or rather never enjoyed, comforts. I do not complain of professional work, but I do not wish to be continually driving up and down the city, out of one house and into another, and come home at night tired to death, unable to do

anything but lie on a sofa and smoke one cigar after another; provided it does not occur to one of my kind patients to be taken with colic or some such complaint, and send for me, post-haste.

"Really, life is becoming unbearable to me, and I can stand this drudgery no longer. I long for rest and comfort, to have a chance to put on a dressing gown and slippers—which, till now, I have only known by name—instead of wearing the regulation frock-coat and boots, in which I have to visit my patients, like one who has to appear on dress-parade, day after day!"

"Then marry a rich young lady, and all your troubles will then be at an end," said Frohberg.

The privy counsellor shook himself as if he had swallowed a spoonful of his nasty medicine.

"Heaven save me from that," he cried. "I would then have an everlasting patient in my house, and would be obliged to treat the soul as well as the body. No. That is not the remedy to help me."

"Staberow, you speak of a matter of which you know nothing," said Frohberg. "You have no idea of the sweets of domestic life."

"I may have no idea of the sweets of domestic life, but I have a very strong foretaste of the disagreeable part of it," rejoined the doctor, quickly. "As a physician, I visit houses and people quite unexpectedly, by day and by night, and I come upon all kinds of scenes and situations. You see, no one prepares himself or herself for the doctor's visit; it has been found much better to appear *au naturel* before him; he knows the whole family inside and out, and it would be sheer folly to attempt to hide anything from him. No, believe me, Frohberg, the many years of inspection I have had into the holiness of married life has not stimulated my desire to marry. On the contrary, it has strengthened my

resolution to abstain from it. I would like to be rich, so that I could give up the more laborious part of my practice. But no rich girl will marry an old fellow like me; besides, when one is married, he is compelled to work all the harder. I desire to rest from labor, but matrimony is the very picture of unrest by day as well as by night. I seek comforts, but matrimony is the most uncomfortable arrangement which our kind Father could have invented. When one is married he is unable to be alone for a moment, is not unobserved for a second, is unable to do the least thing without permission. If I want to smoke a cigar, then my wife wants me to hold the skein of worsted for her while she unravels it; if I want to rest awhile, then she wants me to go walking with her; if I want to take a walk with her, she will have one of her attacks of migraine; if I want to go to bed early, then she has all the news in the world to tell me. In short, it is just the opposite of a bachelor's life, and, albeit the latter has its unpleasantnesses, matrimonial life has tortures which my weak, nervous system is not able to endure."

"What you call tortures, my dear friend, are only trivial annoyances, which, by mutual concessions, are readily disposed of; and even real displeasures and unavoidable differences cannot long prevail where genuine and sincere love is found," said Frohberg, with the feelings of one who is thoroughly convinced of what he says.

"An old fellow like me need not expect to get genuine and sincere love," rejoined the doctor. "A young girl wants to marry a young man who is ardent and has some poetry in him; and if she marries an old man, it is because she cannot get a young one. But, least of all, is she disposed to marry a physician, because, as a rule, the physician is an

irreconcilable enemy to her vanity, and sturdily opposes all the absurdities of dress and customs that fashion ordains. A girl who marries a physician must not be jealous; but where no jealousy can or ought to exist, no love can be expected. And, since matrimony is only possible when based upon sincere love, there is no alternative for the physician but to contract a sensible marriage. But that is absurd, for there is no sense in marrying."

"Your mathematical explanation may be correct," said Frohberg, "but I know somebody who can controvert your statements so fully that you would speedily strike your flag."

"Indeed!" retorted the physician, with the air of one who deems himself infallible.

"As I tell you," affirmed Frohberg, who deemed himself convinced.

"And who is this great mathematician?" asked Staberow.

"Madame Baldrian," answered Frohberg, triumphantly.

The privy counsellor clutched his already somewhat scanty locks with his hands.

"God have mercy upon my poor soul!" he cried. "I pray and hope to be spared coming in contact with this plague of a woman."

Frohberg looked slightly offended.

"You are altogether unjust in your prejudices," said he. "Madame Baldrian is a highly respectable and kind-hearted woman, and sacrifices herself in the hope of making others happy."

"You mean to make herself happy and others unhappy," Staberow corrected him. "Nothing can be deemed a sacrifice that costs one neither money nor trouble. The trouble she takes affords her the greatest pleasure, and she would die if the city authorities would have the sense of prohibiting her

reprehensible occupation. The desire on her part to marry off all mankind has become an actual craze with her. An unmarried man or an unmarried woman is repulsive to her; she cannot bear the sight of such a being, and will not rest till she has, by coaxing, entreaties, and threats, prevailed upon that unfortunate being to be ensnared in the holy bonds of wedlock. But, as regards the consequences, she is totally indifferent, for, once married, they have no further interest to her, and she only mingles in society for the purpose of finding new recruits, or rather victims, who will dance into the matrimonial circle when she whistles for them."

"You are really unjust to that woman," said Frohberg, feeling hurt.

"I don't think I am," replied the privy counsellor. "It is more probable that you are partial to her because she prevailed upon you too to marry."

"And because I am indebted to her for my happiness," added Frohberg, convincingly.

The physician was silent.

"Every rule has an exception," said he, after a pause; "and happy is he who is an exception, or thinks he is. So far as I am concerned, I deem the Baldrian a poison which flows through the veins of society; for she is an unauthorized, meddlesome creature, who intrudes everywhere, introduces herself to everybody, proposes to everyone, without taking the least consideration for the inclinations of the respective individuals, or reflecting a moment whether they are fitted to each other, or whether they have in them the elements of happiness or not. All these things are matters of secondary consideration to her; all she cares for is to chain them together and let them drag their heavy or light chains all through life."

"And for all that, everyone is glad to see the woman," interjected Frohberg.

"The fools, oh, yes!" retorted Dr. Staberow. "The half-witted individuals who look upon matrimony with the same eyes as she does, and the silly creatures who look upon Madame Baldrian as an angel of help, and the rope with which they are dragged into the matrimonial yoke as a chain of roses. Among such people she is certainly welcome, but those she has succeeded in marrying she dares not to call upon."

"I am glad whenever she comes to see me," said Frohberg, feeling hurt.

"Well, you are an exception, as I remarked before," said Staberow, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

"I think there are many more such exceptions," rejoined Frohberg.

"Perhaps," observed the physician, indifferently. "Everyone has his views, according to which he acts and judges. So far as I am concerned, I regard Madame Baldrian as one of the most dangerous match-makers living. She carries on the business *en gros*, and the honored parents—especially the mothers, and the beloved children—especially the daughters, deal *en détail*, and are her most zealous co-operators. It is surprising to me to see the influence which this woman exercises in this city. Everyone knows her doings, and yet everyone submits to be led by her rope. She appears to me like the Rat-catcher of Hameln, who, as soon as she whistles, a swarm of rats surround her."

"You forget her unselfishness," remarked Frohberg.

"Well, that would be a pretty how-do-you-do, to pay her for her own pleasure," said the privy counsellor, provoked; and, after a short pause, he continued: "The people seem to have gone crazy, and it will soon be necessary to have a larger number of

alienists. Before I allow myself to be entrapped by Madame Baldrian——"

"Well?" hastily asked Frohberg.

"I'll become a veterinary doctor and treat young puppies," added the privy counsellor, with evident disgust.

"Take care," jestingly said Frohberg, "that I do not hold you to your word. More than one person has spoken as you do and yet subsequently was forced, as it were, into happiness. As I said before, the only person capable of controverting your arguments and contradicting your assertions regarding love and matrimony, is Madame Baldrian!"

"Tell me, do you take me for an ass?" asked Staberow, looking his friend steadily in the eyes.

"By no means," said Frohberg, laughing. "I only say that nothing is impossible for Madame Baldrian. If she once resolves to make one marry, then she will do it whether he will or not, and if she takes it into her head to make you marry——"

"Good morning!" the privy counsellor interrupted his friend, making a rush for the door.

"Listen, Staberow!" called Frohberg after him.

The doctor stopped and looked back impatiently.

"Stay and dine with us," said Frohberg, pleasantly.

"Impossible!" cried Staberow, plumply. "I have already spent too much time with you to-day. While I have been here I could have looked at the tongues of six noble ladies, and asked seven dyspeptics how they slept last night. Adieu! Be sure you remit my fee promptly, otherwise I will send my collector to you."

By the time he had uttered the last words he had already opened the door, and in the next moment he was gone.

"Capital fellow!" said Frohberg to himself; "but somewhat cranky in his views, and unjust in his judgment. I have never seen such a rabid opponent of matrimony as he is. I fear even Madame Baldrian would find in him an exceedingly obstinate candidate, and one difficult to manage."

Just then the servant announced that dinner was ready.

Frohberg's face lit up with rays of joy.

"How beautiful my Annie is!" muttered he to himself. "I was wrong to send for Staberow on account of a slight indisposition. That man looks at the dark side too much, and causes one altogether too much anxiety and fear. Annie was always so good and sweet. I must drive the whole matter out of my mind, and not worry her unnecessarily."

Feeling perfectly happy, he went to take his wife in to dinner.

The privy counsellor, meanwhile, had descended the stairs, muttering to himself angrily: "There is something wrong with that woman. I thought so all along, but I am convinced now. What can it be, I wonder? My advice to the husband will have little effect, if he don't take her away from Berlin. He is totally unable to carry out my instructions. That good man is blind with love; and how is a blind man to see anything! Some higher power than the physician only can help in such a case. Perhaps chance, which so often appears like the *deus ex machinâ*, and arranges circumstances that were too difficult and complicated for human ingenuity to manage, will bring it about. But what if chance does not supply a remedy—then another instance of supposed happiness falls to the ground. Is not this enough to make one disgusted with matrimony? Sooner will

I continue to drive about the city for ten years more, look at foul tongues, and feel pulses or anything else, and remain my own master. To be the slave of my patients out of the house, and of my wife in the house! No, never!"

Thus soliloquizing he reached the street, roused up his driver—who had fallen asleep over his favorite newspaper—and in another moment was on his way to visit the next patient.

He regained his natural serenity of temper, and strengthened his resolution to end his life in single blessedness, with the unanswerable arguments he had repeated to himself. He wrapped the rug closely about his legs, lit a cigar, and looked perfectly serene and contented.

"How they all rush about in this big city!" he said to himself, looking upon the people as his carriage drove through the streets. "It always makes me think of an ant-hill, with the ants busily rushing about. But why do they all rush about and perspire so? To earn bread for the meal and the necessaries of life for themselves and those depending on them. Had they remained single, they certainly would not have needed so much; but no, they must go and get married and get into trouble. However, it is in their nature to do so—like cattle, that will repeatedly return to the burning barn, or like the moth, that hovers about the flame till it is burned to death. As soon as one is married his troubles begin. No, let me bear my present ills in preference to those of married life."

The privy counsellor's eyes fell upon a soldierly man of imposing appearance, with jet-black dyed hair, who on recognizing him hastily raised his hat, bowed, and greeted him pleasantly:

"Good morning, Herr Privy Counsellor!"

"Good morning, Herr Major!" Staberow replied, saluting him with his hand.

And then he spoke to himself, nodding approvingly with his head:

"There is another sensible fellow, that Major Rumpel? How happy and independent he can run about, living in peace and contentment upon his pension, free from family cares. Yes, there still are some persons who possess a little common sense, and can laugh at the folly of this world."

The privy counsellor blew a cloud of smoke with the utmost self-satisfaction. In the next moment a gust of wind—which was blowing quite strong to-day—suddenly rolled up a thick cloud of dust, and enveloped the elegant carriage of the doctor in a gray mist.

He was engaged in rubbing the dust from his eyes, when a black object came flying through the air, and struck him plump in the face with such force as to knock the cigar from his mouth.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed the privy counsellor, carefully examining his nose, the part that was most severely hurt. "What is the meaning of this? Did anyone intend to kill me?"

After he had convinced himself that his nose was not severely damaged, he looked in his lap for the article that struck him.

"A gentleman's hat!" he said, holding up a fashionable silk head-gear. "Whose may it be?"

He then put his head out of the carriage and looked down the street.

"Ah! there comes the owner!" said the privy counsellor, seeing a young man with flying hair running after the carriage. "Hold on, Frederick!" he called to the driver, who instantly reined in the horses. "What, is that you, Rarrer?" he said to the young man, who had now reached the carriage.

"It was well the wind blew your hat into my carriage, otherwise you might have had to run a good deal further for it."

"I am vevy gwateful to you, Hevv pvivy counsellah," replied Rarrer, panting for breath; "I just bought it, and didn't pehceive that it was too big foh me till I was out in the stweet."

He then took the hat, which the doctor handed him, and put it on his head; but no sooner had he done so when he made a terribly distorted face and tore his head-covering off with both hands.

"Heavens! what is the matter?" asked the doctor, alarmed at the young man's appearance.

Rarrer first examined a painful spot on his head, next looked into the hat, and then, in the best-natured manner said:

"You left youah cigah in my hat; pehmit me to wetuhn it to you."

"I beg a thousand pardons, my friend," said the doctor.

"Don't mention it, I beg of you!" said Rarrer.

In the next minute the carriage rolled away and turned Unter den Linden, where a dark mass of humanity swayed back and forth.

Suddenly the privy counsellor heard a heart-rending cry, and as he turned his head to ascertain the cause, he saw a handsome little fellow chased by a barking dog, seeking to escape by running away, and crying pitifully, with terror stamped upon his countenance.

Instantly the expression on the face of the little fellow changed to that of joy, he spread out his little arms, ran toward a gentleman, and exclaimed, "Papa!" but with such a feeling of delight, contentment, and security in his voice, that the tones penetrated into the very heart of the privy counsellor.

He rode further and further, but was totally unable to forget the picture and the voice.

"H'm, h'm!" he murmured, after a long reflection. "It would be very good and nice if one could be a father in a respectable way, and not be obliged to take a wife!"

CHAPTER V.

HEARTS AND HANDS.

Three months had passed since Privy Counsellor Staberow's visit to Herr von Frohberg; and as the latter did not again send for the former, the doctor did not visit his friend again. To make sociable calls physicians usually have no time; moreover, it was painful to the privy counsellor to probe deeply the domestic affairs of the friend of his youth, especially as he saw no disposition on the part of the fair dame to submit to his instructions.

These were the reasons why the two friends neither saw nor heard from each other for such a long time.

If we look first for Herr von Frohberg, we will find him in the same room we saw him in the last time, and although it is almost unchanged in its appointments, still it seems to have been especially arranged and decorated to-day with flowers, and presenting a gala appearance. On careful inspection, however, one readily could detect a number of articles that were not there on the former occasion. Upon the table and flower-stands stood beautiful bouquets, that diffused a delicious fragrance, and filled the room with an almost intoxicating aroma; upon the back of a chair was partly spread out a beautiful India shawl, that seemed to tremble from impatience to envelop some soft, voluptuous creature, and near it, upon a table, were two elegant porcelain vases which also contained fragrant bouquets.

In the centre of the room stood the master of the

house, contentedly rubbing his hands, his face beaming with happiness, looking first in one direction, then in another, and murmuring to himself from time to time:

"Everything is arranged now. There is the shawl; the flowers are on the table, and the vases with the bouquets make a fine appearance. I might send for her now. How glad she will be! And how much pleasure it will afford me to see her happy!"

He was about to order the servant to do what he had just proposed, when he saw a gentleman standing at the door, who had entered noiselessly, and was observing him with a sad smile.

The gentleman seemed to be about ten years younger than Herr von Frohberg, and although a close observer would readily have detected considerable resemblance between them, still it would only have been such a resemblance as could exist between beauty and homeliness, for the younger man, as far as appearance went, was the very opposite of the elder. He was tall and well proportioned, had a finely shaped head, and the expression of his countenance denoted a serious temperament.

He was one of those silent, yet attractive, individuals of whom young girls like to dream, and set up as their ideal. The dignified bearing, the frank, open countenance, the full and expressive eye, denoted the noble man.

"Ah! is that you, brother?" Herr von Frohberg exclaimed, joyfully, as soon as he saw him.

"Yes!" replied Legation Counsellor Hermann von Frohberg, the same whom we saw riding across Potsdam bridge, and the sight of whom did not seem to be pleasant to the handsome Baron Branco. "Yes, and I must confess that I have spent quite a while here at the door in wondering at you."

The older brother looked at the younger as if

he was at a loss how to take his remark; however, he replied, blithely:

"Oh, yes, I know what you mean. You are disposed to make fun of your old brother, who is as happy, and as ardently loves his wife as a young man of twenty. To be sure, I am no longer as spry as I was. Time has left some traces upon my face, and the moon is beginning to peer through the hairs on the top of my head—signs indicative of the approach of the eve of a man's life. But my heart is still young, Hermann, because of the happiness it constantly enjoys and derives from my adorable Annie!"

The legation counsellor made no reply.

"It is her birthday to-day," the elder Frohberg continued, looking at his brother again with an expression on his face that mirrored the joy of his whole being.

"I know it," the younger replied, with his usually sad tone of voice.

"See this shawl, Hermann; that is my birthday present to her," said Karl von Frohberg, blissfully rubbing his hands.

"Very pretty, very pretty!" remarked the legation counsellor, without turning round.

"And that pair of beautiful vases there is our friend Miller's present to her. Commercial Counsellor Miller, from Charlottenburg, you know, was Annie's guardian."

"Very pretty, very pretty," rejoined the younger brother, just as *distrait* as before, without looking at the present.

Neither spoke for a little while. The older brother felt somewhat chilled at the cold bearing and indifference of his brother, and, after looking at him for a while, surprised and anxious, he, with evident reluctance, finally resolved to ask a question

that almost died upon his lips, and the last words of which were almost inaudible.

"Do you present her nothing, Hermann?"

"Certainly I do!" rejoined the legation counsellor, with the same listless indifference.

Karl von Frohberg's good-natured face became irradiated with joy.

"May one see the gift with which you will surprise her, dear Hermann?" he asked, overcome by an uncontrollable blissful curiosity.

"Certainly," rejoined the legation counsellor, taking a small morocco case from the breast-pocket of his coat and handing it to his brother, without looking at him.

The loving husband grasped it with almost childish joy, opened it with trembling hands, and looked into it.

For a moment his face became overcast with an expression of surprise; silently he gazed quite a while into the open case, and then he murmured, while still in a state of wonderment:

"My portrait!"

He was evidently still uncertain from what standpoint he should view the present which was intended for his wife, for, after looking at the medallion quite a while, he returned it to his brother, and earnestly gazed upon the latter's countenance, as if expecting there to find the explanation.

But his brother's countenance was calm and serious as usual, and his eyes were cast down.

However, the older Frohberg was altogether too happy to-day to become a prey to doubts and puzzles; hence, with a little effort he succeeded in suppressing them, gave his brother credit for the best of motives in selecting his portrait for a birthday present, pressed his hand gratefully in acknowledgment of it, and, with the joyousness that seemed to permeate his whole being to-day, said:

"My good Hermann, that is really a very charming idea of yours."

Then he added, with a trembling voice and with tears visible in his eyes: "I thank you all the more for your beautiful gift, as I feared you might have forgotten Annie's birthday."

"What made you think so?" asked the legation counsellor, who, if possible, became even more serious than before.

The elder Frohberg seemed to feel very uncomfortable as this subject was broached, for his countenance became overcast with an expression of embarrassment which he found necessary to subdue before he was able to reply to his brother:

"Let us talk candidly, Hermann," he began, "as, thank God, we have always done. You remember how you spoke at the time I married Annie, a girl without means, of a plain family; how opposed you were to this union and to my bringing this girl of an untitled family into ours. But I was unable to yield to your reasoning, for the voice of love spoke louder in me. I felt that it was absolutely necessary for my well-being to possess that charming creature, and therefore I married her.

"From the moment that Annie became my wife," continued the older, warming with his subject, "from the moment your opposition and persuasion proved of no avail, you abandoned both, and treated Annie with the kindness and friendliness, and with the consideration and respect which you deemed due to the wife of your brother.

"That was a great source of joy to me, Hermann, and, still more, it has made me permanently happy to see you continue to treat her with kindness and consideration, and hear you express yourself to the effect that she deserves it all."

The serious face of the legation counsellor

twitched slightly, but it was soon controlled. The older brother continued, without apparently having noticed it.

"Still, for some time back," he went on, in a regretful tone of voice, "you have not been acting as friendly and affectionately to Annie as you used to act. You have become cooler and silent, Hermann. You visit us seldom. You are no more the same kind, affectionate brother you were formerly."

"I did not think you would regard my conduct in that light," said the legation counsellor, who now seemed to have become master of himself.

"Oh, yes, your conduct pained me very much," rejoined Herr von Frohberg. "Tell me, Hermann, have you any fault to find with my wife?"

"None whatever!" replied the younger brother, with his customary coolness.

"Wherefor are you so reserved, then?" asked the other Frohberg. "Why have you kept yourself aloof from us, which, as you know, causes me much sorrow?"

The legation counsellor seemed to struggle with some inward emotion.

"It is nothing, Karl," said he, finally; "I have not been very well for some time, and I have had something to vex me, besides. But I promise not to annoy you in future with my depression of spirits."

The elder brother's face lit up with an expression of delight, and he grasped the younger's hand, and pressed it warmly.

"I thank you, Hermann," said he; "be kind to her; she deserves it, and you will make me happy."

He had scarcely ended speaking when the door was opened, and a rustling noise was heard, as if made by a heavy silk dress.

Both brothers looked around, and saw Madame von Frohberg enter the room, but not with an ex-

pression of forced pleasure on her face, as when last we saw her, nor in bad humor or violent, but dreamily, lost in thought, and sorrowfully.

She was evidently greatly preoccupied, for she greeted both the gentlemen with a "Good-morning!" in a low voice, and was about to pass them by to proceed to the window.

Frohberg gazed upon his wife with a look full of tenderness and anxiety. "Good-morning, dear Annie," said he, extending his hand to her. "What ails you to-day? You look so sad and gloomy, on this your birthday, too."

The lady made a slight movement of surprise. Had she really forgotten her natal day, or did she only pretend it?

"Ah, that is so!" said she, forcing a smile into her gloomy face, and looking about the room. "These fragrant and beautiful flowers ought to have assisted my poor memory."

The husband tiptoed to the shawl, carefully spread it upon his arm, and in that manner presented it to his wife.

"This is your birthday present, Annie," said he, smiling pleasantly upon his wife, as if he would feast upon the impression his gift would make.

"Perfectly charming!" she murmured, glancing at the shawl absently. "I thank you, dear Karl."

"And this is Hermann's present," he continued, handing her the little case with a look of pleasure at his brother.

The lady took the case, nodding pleasantly her thanks to her brother-in-law, and opened it.

But barely did she obtain a view of the inside, when she involuntarily shuddered, and cast an almost frightened look upon her husband.

"It was not my idea," said the good-natured husband, apologetically. "In fact, I am somewhat

superstitious about the wife wearing her husband's picture while he is still living; but, as I said, it was entirely Hermann's idea."

After saying this, the affectionate husband walked to the background of the room, for the purpose of replacing the shawl upon the chair, and which his wife had scarcely seen.

The legation counsellor followed his brother with his looks, and when he saw him busying himself in spreading the shawl upon the back of the chair, he approached his sister-in-law and whispered to her:

"Pardon me for not presenting you with something that would have been more to your taste; but I opined that it must always afford a woman pleasure to have her husband's picture before her eyes."

The lady became palpably embarrassed; her pale cheeks suddenly reddened, and she was obliged to turn away her head to avoid the sharp look of her brother-in-law, that was searchingly directed upon her.

"Just come here for a minute, Annie!" called her husband, from the farther end of the room. "Here are some more pretty things. These two vases were sent by our kind friend Miller, and a lot of bouquets from other friends. This one was sent ——"

The lady turned quickly, and her eye glistened with joyful expectation.

"By whom?" she asked, before her husband could finish the sentence.

"By Solicitor von Collin," answered her husband; "that handsome young gentleman who has called several times, and once dined with us. Very nice in him to show so much attention."

The lady was perceptibly disappointed by the answer she got, for she turned away to the window without looking at the bouquets and the rest of the

presents, and gazed down upon the street, sadly and gloomily.

"No doubt we will have many visitors later in the day. Our friends are sure to come and tender you their best wishes on your natal day," spoke Herr von Frohberg, cheerily.

His wife made no reply. Just then the door was opened, and the slight creaking noise it produced caused her to turn her head quickly in that direction.

A servant entered and announced:

"Herr Solicitor von Collin and Herr Privy Counsellor Dr. Staberow desire to pay their respects to my gracious lady."

Again a shade of disappointment overcast the beautiful face of the lady, she sat down upon the sofa, instinctively smoothed out the folds of her robe, and said, indifferently:

"Will be delighted to see them."

The servant disappeared, and directly after the two gentlemen mentioned entered.

Solicitor von Collin, who was not on such a familiar footing at the house, advanced to the lady, bowed, murmured a few conventional congratulations, and then fell back a few paces.

Privy Counsellor Staberow, as an old friend, walked up to the lady, cordially pressed her hand, and expressed his best wishes in a few kindly words, which, however, she acknowledged by a very brief "Thank you."

A painful silence then ensued, as is often the case in the tedious, conventional, social life of to-day, especially at formal receptions, when the visitors are not familiar with one another. Under such circumstances, the lady of the house usually contrives that the conversation does not flag, and the time before dinner is announced, when the gentlemen

seem to have been converted into pillars of salt, like Lot's wife, and the ladies into immovable wall-flowers, is filled up with topics of conversation that will interest everyone. In this case, however, the hostess seemed totally disinclined to perform her part.

The legation counsellor, who, to-day especially, was not conversationally inclined, busied himself in watching his sister-in-law, and allowed no movement on her part to escape his notice; while the master of the house, who anxiously waited for his wife to invite the gentlemen to be seated, finally did it himself, with some degree of embarrassment.

The gentlemen seated themselves, put their hats upon the carpet near them, and waited for someone to start the conversation.

Poor Karl von Frohberg began to feel hot; he looked anxiously, now at his wife—who, however, was again lost in thought—then at the gentlemen present, who returned his look pleasantly aud hopefully, as they thought that he was now about to speak.

"Very fine weather we are having," began, at last, the master of the house, after debating with himself how to commence the conversation.

"Delightful," responded the majority of those present in chorus, who were visibly relieved to find that the silence was at last broken.

"Such fine and healthy weather is good for our friend here, the privy counsellor, Dr. Staberow, I presume," continued Herr von Frohberg. "Not many people are ill now, and he is not obliged to drive about so much. Your horses get a good rest now, don't they?" said he, addressing himself directly to the friend of his youth.

"Oh, no!" replied the privy counsellor, a smile of embarrassment retracting the angles of his mouth—a condition quite unusual to him.

"What do you do with them?" inquired Frohberg. "You certainly don't hire them out for pay?"

"Heavens, no!" answered the doctor; "I drive for pleasure."

The master of the house gazed at his friend in utter astonishment, and then burst out laughing.

"You go out driving for pleasure!" exclaimed he. "You who considered constant driving about a torture, and deemed yourself happy when you could lie upon the sofa and smoke your cigar! Do you remember, Staberow, that long jeremiade of yours I had to listen to upon that very topic in this room?"

The privy counsellor smiled in a peculiarly embarrassed manner.

"I remember," he replied; "but things have changed since then. You will be surprised when you hear, old friend, what has happened to me."

The master of the house looked upon the physician inquisitively.

"Have you given up your practice?" he asked.

The doctor shook his head negatively.

"Something more wonderful than that," he replied. "You will be thunderstruck when you hear."

Frohberg's face assumed an expression as if he had a faint foreboding of something totally incomprehensible having occurred, and was still unwilling to believe it; while Staberow gazed at him with a sheepish smile; the others present now also began to manifest some interest in this conversation.

"Look here, now, you have not gone and——?" asked Herr Frohberg, gazing upon his friend with big, doubtful eyes.

The privy counsellor was at a loss which way to direct his gaze.

"Staberow," cried Frohberg, "I dare not venture to say it. You have not——"

The doctor nodded with his head.

"Why, what?" asked Madame von Frohberg, turning to the doctor, with that curiosity which woman, in all conditions of life, manifests.

"I have gone and got married," uttered the privy counsellor below his breath, with the embarrassment and shyness of a young girl who acknowledges her first love affair to her mother.

"God have mercy on us all!" exclaimed Frohberg, sinking back in his seat, inexpressibly astonished. "What will happen next, I wonder? Nothing will surprise me after this."

The legation secretary cast a stealthy glance at his sister-in-law, who was just in the act of tendering her congratulations to the doctor.

"But, man alive!" cried Karl von Frohberg, again turning to his friend, "is it really yourself, or only your shadow? But, why did you not notify us when the event took place?"

"The affair was duly announced in the *Voss Journal*," replied the doctor.

"But you know that I only read the *Cross* newspaper, and go so little into society that I would not be likely to hear of it," remonstrated von Frohberg.

"I had intended to call and inform you of it personally, but I put it off from day to day," said the privy counsellor, in a subdued voice.

"Now tell me, how in the name of all that is wonderful did this thing come about?" cried Frohberg, who was still unable to check his surprise.

"To tell you the truth, I really don't know myself," replied Staberow. "Had it depended on me alone, I certainly would not have accomplished it, but I had such an able and zealous confederate, patroness, spokeswoman—call her what you like—that I was engaged and married before I actually had time to think over the matter."

Herr von Frohberg clasped his hands together in astonishment.

"Madame Baldrian!" he exclaimed.

The privy counsellor nodded, and then cast down his eyes, while Collin seemed to be somewhat embarrassed.

"Oh, my prophetic soul!" said Frohberg, his face brightening.

"Yes, you are right!" said the privy counsellor. "She is a wonderful creature; but for all that I have said of her, I think she has really done a good thing for me."

"Oh, all the marriages which are promoted by Madame Baldrian prosper exceedingly well!" exclaimed Frohberg, casting a look of joy upon his wife, who, however, dropped her eyes beneath his gaze. "And you love your wife?" he continued, addressing himself to Staberow.

"Yes," returned the latter. "For the first time in my life I experienced this sensation, and was not wholly capable of judging its effects. But I really feel perfectly happy," he continued, becoming a little more animated. "My wife is young, beautiful, lovable, and rich. One certainly cannot ask more. By marrying her I expect soon to realize that ideal life which I have always longed for; for she brings me so much money that I can give up my practice, or, at least, so much of it that I will have more leisure time. But above all, my wife has already displayed more excellent domestic qualities than I supposed a woman could possess. I certainly did not deserve to become so happy, considering how great a sceptic and egoist I was. I may justly say I have reached the haven of rest, the long longed-for rest, comfort, and ease which I only supposed was possible to attain by a bachelor without any business. Ah!" said he,

stretching himself complacently, "I will live a heavenly life!"

"Excuse me, but how long have you been married, Herr Privy Counsellor?" asked the legation counsellor, now joining in the conversation.

"Fourteen days," said Staberow, bowing.

"Ah!" ejaculated the younger Frohberg.

"In a few days my mother-in-law will return and make her home with us," continued the privy counsellor with the description of his blissfulness. "She, too, is a splendid woman, whom I only saw at the engagement and the nuptial eve; for immediately after she was obliged to make a short journey on account of some money matters which she had to attend to herself, her husband being dead."

"H'm, h'm!" muttered the legation counsellor. "You have a mother-in-law too, and she is going to live with you, hey?"

"Yes, it is her wish to be with us, and, in reality, I have nothing against it, for my wife will thus have a pleasant companion, and will not take up so much of my time; thus will I get all the rest I need. I wish my good mother-in-law were already back."

Just then the servant entered the room and began to laugh instead of announcing anyone.

"What is the matter?" asked Frohberg, while his wife was again seized by a sudden, nervous impatience.

"There is a young gentleman without who wishes to pay his respects to my gracious lady," replied the servant, still laughing.

"Well? And what is his name?" asked Herr von Frohberg.

"I asked him, my gracious Herr," replied the servant, "but he did not tell me. When I said to him, whom have I the honor to announce? he made

an awful face at me, and on repeating the question, he made one still more horrible."

"I will have to discharge this man, too," muttered Herr von Frohberg, annoyed. "Every three months one is obliged to get a new servant."

He then left the room for the purpose of seeing who the individual was who wanted to pay his respects to the lady of the house. It was not long before he returned, leading a young gentleman by the hand, who was red from embarrassment and excitement, and who passively allowed himself to be conducted to the lady.

"Herr Rarrer is so kind as to desire to tender you his best wishes, Annie, dear," said Frohberg, while the young man was in the act of taking another step in order to express his congratulations properly. But as he was about to open his mouth, the attention of the company was aroused by a peculiar crackling noise, and on looking in the direction whence it came, they saw that Rarrer had just stepped upon Collin's hat, which the latter had placed near him upon the carpet.

The poor young man now became dreadfully embarrassed and fearfully nervous.

"I beg youah pahdon a thousand times, my gwacious lady!" he mumbled to Madame von Frohberg. "Accept my heahtiest congwatulations and best wishes, my deah Collin!"

And when he found that he had delivered his addresses to the wrong parties, his face flushed crimson, the perspiration ran down his face in streams, he retreated a few steps, and feeling morally annihilated, sank into the first seat he could find.

But barely had that part of his economy which nature has destined to perform the functions of sitting, come in contact with the bottom of a chair,

when he jumped up with a cry of agonizing pain, as if he had been shot, and remained standing with an expression of suffering and shamefacedness upon his countenance.

"What is the matter? Have you the toothache?" asked the privy counsellor, anxiously.

Rarrer did not answer, but his face still bore a painful expression.

The company present were at a loss to account for his singular conduct, and the privy counsellor, whose professional eye noticed the furtive examination which Rarrer had made with his hand, got up, approached him, and commenced cautiously to feel the young man's coat-tails; but he suddenly withdrew his hand and in astonishment asked:

"What in the name of all that is wonderful have you got there? My finger is bleeding!"

Thus saying, he carefully put his hand into the young man's coat-pocket, and pulled out a large but completely crushed bouquet.

At the sight of it Rarrer's embarrassment reached the highest point, and when he observed that the looks of everyone present were directed upon him, he took the bouquet out of the privy counsellor's hand, threw it into his hat, and confusedly mumbled:

"I beg yoah pahdon a thousand times. I wanted to pwesent pehsonally a bouquet to my gwacious lady, but as the new sevvant was unable to pwonounce my name I was about to give him my cahd, and in ohdah to get one out of the case I put the bouquet in my pocket. Just then you came out, Hevv von Fwohbehg; that suhpvised me so much that I fohgot; pway excuse me."

"I hope you are not hurt much, my friend," said the privy counsellor.

"It does not mettah," replied the young man,

quickly, evidently fearing to have anything to do with the doctor, his last experience with him being still fresh in his memory. He therefore hastily sat down again, to avoid all such dangers.

"Why, Herr Rarrer, you are wearing a white cravat," whispered Collin, who had partly succeeded in straightening out his crushed hat.

"Yes, I have just become awah of it," Rarrer returned, in a whisper. "I feel vewy uncomfoahtable; I am almost always wong. I thought at a bifday weception——"

"At a morning call, never!" returned Collin.

Rarrer was apparently desirous of making still further inquiries of his friend, when the older Frohberg resumed the topic of conversation that had been interrupted.

"Well, Staberow, so you have found a charming wife, hey?"

The privy counsellor nodded in a manner expressive of the blissfulness that permeated his entire being.

"That is the kind of a wife you, too, Herr von Collin, should take," remarked Frohberg, addressing himself to the barrister.

The latter seemed to become embarrassed by the remark addressed to him, but recovering himself somewhat, he asked:

"Why?"

"Well, any young man might marry a handsome and rich young lady," replied Frohberg.

"H'm!" ejaculated the barrister, coolly, and then he added, in a shameless jocular manner, which is deemed quite the thing by the young men of the present day:

"The word 'rich' is comparative, and is differently understood by different persons. Hence it is always necessary to be explicit about it."

The legation counsellor cast a look of contempt upon Barrister von Collin, which, however, the latter did not observe, but went on giving his views:

"As for me, I have decided upon a definite sum, from which I will under no circumstances depart. I am a barrister, and at present my income is rather limited, and I must confess that I have no great desire to undergo a third examination in order to attain a higher position. Hence I must either remain where I am or marry a rich girl. And if a person has once placed a price upon his noble hand he is not disposed to take any less for it; hence mine is not to be had for less than two hundred thousand dollars."

"Then you are very likely to be allowed to keep it," cuttingly remarked the doctor.

The lady of the house, meanwhile, had relapsed into her former state of absent-mindedness and disinterestedness.

The barrister shrugged his shoulders.

"One takes chances in matters of business," said he, with the manner of a blasé speculator. "In the worst case, I have an old uncle who in all probability will make me his sole heir, as he never married, and I am his next of kin. Unfortunately, he is afflicted with gout in the worst form," he added, in a tone of voice that sounded more like joy than sorrow.

"But gout is not always fatal," said the doctor, laughingly. "One may attain the age of Methusalem with it."

"I know it," replied the barrister, who most likely only affected to be heartless, and was now utterly ashamed of it. "I do not wish my uncle to die, for he is really a good and kind man, and he has my best wishes. But the expectations of an inheritance sound pleasantly in the ears of a mother-

in-law, and justify me in making high claims. He who does not make the most of his advantages is an ass."

"Your sentiments, my dear Collin," said Staberow, ironically, "are full of poetry and tenderness!"

The barrister gazed upon him in a puzzled manner.

"Oh," he returned, "I know very well what poetry and sentiment are, and have more poetical and sentimental feelings than you will perhaps give me credit for. I admit it is not the fantastic lyric of the poet and of the sentimentalist, but practical poetry, based upon good sense and regulated by arithmetic."

"You seem to have figured out your matrimonial happiness, Herr von Collin," said Herr von Frohberg, "with such mathematical exactness, that we may hope to receive an invitation to the wedding at no distant day."

The barrister smiled in a most self-sufficient manner.

"Then you have already found the X of your equation?" asked the privy counsellor.

"No cavalier bothers himself personally with such things, replied Herr von Collin, with an insipid blasé mien, which in reality looked foreign to him. "I have a good friend, who is kind enough to interest herself for me, and I feel as if she has already found what will answer my purpose completely."

The government solicitor was about to make some additional statements, when the servant entered and announced:

"Herr Baron von Branco wishes to present his compliments to my gracious lady."

Madame von Frohberg started visibly, and a mo-

mentary glow overspread her countenance, which, however, her brother-in-law only noticed, the others having risen from their seats to greet the new arrival, or rather to avail themselves of this opportunity to take their leave.

Baron von Branco, whose acquaintance we have already formed in the Club of the Young Gentlemen, entered, walked quickly and gracefully, but withal evidently embarrassed, up to the lady of the house, handed her an elegant bouquet, and murmured his congratulations in a lower voice than the earlier callers had done.

Madame von Frohberg accepted the bouquet, for which she thanked him with a somewhat cold look, after which the baron shook hands with the husband, and bowed chillily to the rest.

The privy counsellor and Herr von Collin seemed disposed to leave, but they remained standing, and the rest of the company were consequently also compelled to stand; and thus, with their hats in their hands, they kept up the conversation.

Herr von Frohberg urged the solicitor to give a few additional particulars of his prospective alliance; the legation secretary retained his place in the embrasure of the window, from which place he watched the company present; Rarrer had just then pulled the shawl off the back of the chair, and laboriously was striving to replace it folded as before, in which effort he was kindly and laughingly assisted by the doctor; and the handsome Baron Branco advanced hesitatingly, and evidently feeling ill at ease, to the hostess, and with forced serenity of voice and countenance, bent down to her, and asked:

"How have you been lately, my gracious madame?"

Madame von Frohberg was silent for a while; then she replied, with marked emphasis:

"It is a long while since you did me the honor to inquire after my health, Herr Baron; I am quite unused to so much attention on your part."

Herr von Branco became still more embarrassed, albeit the eyes of the beautiful woman were not even directed upon him.

"I was unavoidably compelled to make a journey on important business," he stammered out.

Instantly the searching, penetrating gaze of the lady was directed upon his countenance, beneath which he shrank together and turned pale.

"You were never absent from Berlin, I know it full well," said Madame von Frohberg; and she was about to add something, when she noticed that her brother-in-law was watching her from his place of observation, and that Privy Counsellor Staberow and Herr von Collin were approaching her with the evident intention of bidding her farewell.

She, therefore, quickly regained her self-control, suppressed her excitement, and, with the amiability of a perfect woman of the world, said:

"Once more, gentlemen, I thank you for your kindness and attention; pray call again."

"I can't account why Herr Miller hasn't come," remarked Herr von Frohberg, shaking his head. "Usually he is the first to call, but to-day he seems to have forgotten us altogether."

On hearing the name of Miller mentioned, Baron Branco started visibly, and, in a state of restlessness that he was unable to control, turned to Herr von Frohberg, and asked:

"You expect a gentleman by the name of Miller?"

"Yes," returned the master of the house, "Commercial Counsellor Miller, from Charlottenburg, the former guardian of my wife. Has he the honor of being known to you?"

The restlessness of the baron visibly increased; his whole being seemed to become affected with feverish excitement.

"Yes," I know the gentleman, stammered the baron, "and for that reason I regret all the more that I am obliged to leave you so soon. It would have afforded me much pleasure to meet him here."

"Must you really go so soon?" asked the older Frohberg. "Can't you grant us another half-hour of your company? I expect Herr Miller at any minute."

"I regret it very much," replied the baron; "I promised some friends to accompany them to the races, and as I am proverbially punctual——"

"Oh, we want to go to the races too," interrupted Madame von Frohberg, who, with a mixture of anger and satisfaction, watched the growing embarrassment of the baron, "but we have more than two hours time yet."

Herr von Branco bit his lip.

"I am aware of that, my gracious lady," he answered, with forced suavity; "but my friends agreed to take breakfast with me at my rooms, and after that I am to accompany them to the races."

"Such important engagements I cannot, of course, hope to interfere with by any invitations which I may extend," said Madame von Frohberg, coldly; "do not discommode yourself on our account, Herr Baron."

The latter drew a sigh of relief on thus being released. He bowed to the lady deeply, which she acknowledged by a scarcely perceptible nod of her head, and, having shaken hands with Herr von Frohberg, and condescendingly nodded in general to all the others present, he was just about to leave the room, when the servant met him on the threshold and announced:

"Herr Commercial Counsellor Miller!"

Branco recoiled as if a ghost had suddenly appeared before him.

"Will be pleased to see him," said Madame von Frohberg. Scarcely had the servant disappeared when a little round man rolled into the room like a ball, while the baron's brow became wrinkled and involuntarily he stepped backward a few paces, with all the signs of intense annoyance pictured in his countenance.

The commercial counsellor was a little friendly, happy-go-lucky fellow, who was round in every way, and, for that reason, when he walked appeared to roll, or as if he was being rolled, the more so as his head and the upper part of his body were always in advance of the rest.

His round head was already tolerably bald, but the thin, straggling hairs were carefully brushed and flattened down upon the smooth, shining skull. The eyes were round, and glistened and blinked constantly in the most friendly manner. The nose was round. The cheeks, owing to their plumpness, were somewhat disposed to be pendulous, and the oval mouth, surrounded by the full, plump lips, gave ample proof that he was a good liver, and given to chatting. The somewhat short arms dangled like a pair of sausages beside the corpulent trunk, which was almost as broad as it was long, and which was supported upon a pair of short, thick extremities that were constantly in rapid motion, explaining sufficiently the reason why his forehead was always bedewed with drops of perspiration both summer and winter.

"Good morning, children!" the little man began, as soon as he ambled into the room with hasty strides and short, gasping breath, holding his hat in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, with which he energetically mopped his round head. "Good

morning, dear Annie," he immediately addressed himself to the lady, who had risen for the purpose of receiving her former guardian. "Let me kiss your pretty hand and wish you a hundred happy returns of the day, and all the happiness you can dream of. My vases with the bouquets have arrived, I hope? Oh, yes, there they are, I see. Are you pleased with them?—Yes. Then I am glad. No thanks, child, no thanks. I am somewhat late to-day, hey? Will make up for it in some way; will kiss your other pretty hand, too. Come to me, you are younger. There, now, I hope you are not angry with me anymore. Good morning, Frohberg; give me your hand! Good morning, Herr Privy Counsellor Staberow; have read the announcement of your marriage in the paper; congratulate you heartily; seems to agree with you very well. Well, a doctor must know what is good for him. Good morning, dear legation secretary; don't look so serious, it spoils one's appetite and puts one in bad humor. I? Thanks, gentlemen, I am very well, especially since I took sea-baths at Ostende. I feel as strong as a lighthouse now. By your leave, friends, I'll sit down. I am somewhat tired, having walked fast. Those sea-baths, I tell you, are very strengthening. Whoever does not regain his youthful vigor from sea-baths never had any!"

Having delivered this speech with scarcely a break, he rubbed his fat, podgy hands in happy remembrance of his past enjoyments, and then dropped into an upholstered chair near by, so that his short, thick legs bounced high up in front of him.

But scarcely had he fixed himself satisfactorily in his soft seat when his gaze fell upon Baron Branco, who was stealthily endeavoring to make his exit from the room.

"Ah, you are here, too, my dear baron!" exclaimed the little commercial counsellor, bouncing out of his seat like an india-rubber ball. "I did not see you at all when I came in. What! you want to leave, and I only just came in?"

Herr von Branco became indescribably embarrassed. It was evident that he feared he would make a bad impression upon that gentleman, yet some hidden power apparently seemed to impel him to leave, for he bowed lowly, and with forced suavity replied:

"Pardon me, my dear commercial counsellor, for leaving so soon; but I am expected at my house, and am unable to remain any longer."

"Don't detain yourself on my account, my dear baron, I beg of you," returned little Miller. "Always look to your comfort, that is my rule of life. Adieu! Hope to have the honor of seeing you again soon!"

Baron Branco bowed gracefully to the company present once more and quickly left the room, and little Miller had once more gathered up his coat-tails in his hands preparatory to dropping into his seat, when he saw Barrister von Collin bowing to him profoundly, who, with the doctor, were about to take their leave.

The little man's face assumed a puzzled expression at the marked courtesy of the strange gentleman, but he bowed in return, still holding the skirts of his coat in his hands.

"A chair!" murmured just then Madame von Frohberg, who seemed to have become greatly affected by what had occurred during the last few moments, and who stood swaying herself as if about to fall.

Like a flash of lightning Rarrer darted forward, and, in his blind zeal to assist the lady, pushed

the chair toward her which the commercial counsellor was just about to drop into, and in the next moment little Miller was rolling and sprawling at the gallant Rarrer's feet.

"Oh my!" exclaimed the little commercial counsellor, his hand still clutching his coat-tails, looking up to Rarrer from his position on the floor, while Frohberg in alarm rushed to his wife's assistance. "Why did you take the chair away from behind me, young man?"

"I beg youah pahdon a thousand times!" gasped poor Rarrer, in a husky voice, striving with all his might to assist the little man to rise. "My gwacious lady called for a chaiah, and I took the first one at hand, not thinking you weah about to sit in it."

"Oh, well, if you did not do it intentionally, then nothing more need be said about it," said Miller, good-naturedly, letting go of his coat-tails now. "I am not much the worse for it."

He then took another chair, convinced himself that it was secure, and dropped into it much more slowly than in the former one.

Madame von Frohberg had meanwhile fully recovered, and her husband seated himself near her. The legation secretary still remained at his place of observation in the embrasure of the window. Rarrer was so embarrassed that he was unable to decide whether he should now take his leave, which he was very anxious to do, and so he placed himself near the cold porcelain stove, and listened to the conversation that was again going on.

"Nice man, that Baron Branco!" observed Commercial Counsellor Miller, after a brief silence.

"Yes," replied the older Frohberg, whose wife seemed once more to be interested in the subject of the conversation.

"Have you known him long?" asked Miller, blinking with his bright little eyes and puckering his luscious lips.

"About a year. Isn't it so, Annie?" returned her husband.

"I think so," she answered, indifferently.

The commercial counsellor reflectingly wobbled his head in blissful contentment.

"Belongs to a good family, I understand. Is a real baron, too? Not one made by his tailor, hey?"

"Oh no," laughingly replied Herr von Frohberg.

"A handsome man is always worth something," continued the commercial counsellor, smirkingly. "His worldly possessions, however, are not very great, hey?"

"Can't say, I am sure, my dear friend," replied Frohberg; whereat the little commercial counsellor commenced to whistle, like one who is very much taken up with his own thoughts.

"But why do *you* ask all these questions?" said Madame von Frohberg, addressing herself to her erstwhile guardian. "Are you so interested in Baron Branco?"

"I? No!" replied the commercial counsellor, swinging his round body to and fro, striving to appear unconcerned. "Mere curiosity, nothing else. Why should the baron interest me?"

And then he suddenly jumped off the seat, picked up his hat and cane, and hastily said, as if his time was limited:

"I must not stay longer; must go to Borchard's and get some breakfast. When one comes in town he wants to see what is going on. Who knows how long I will be permitted to do that! Ten years ago, when I retired from business, with three hundred thousand dollars, I deemed myself a rich man; then the children were quite young; but when one

has two marriageable daughters, one must necessarily think how to economize. I would like to give my children something. I am resolved to do that, but I want to retain something for myself and wife too. I want them to enjoy their youth, and not long for my death, so that they might inherit my money; that is a terrible thought to me. My two daughters, everybody will admit, are charming girls; but if I had another child I would be bankrupted, which would certainly be unpleasant. But there is no danger of an increase of my family, though since my holiday at the seashore——"

At this point the little man stopped abruptly, clapped his fingers upon his full rosy lips, winked with his little round eyes in a roguish manner to Annie, whose hand he kissed again, and hurried away to betake himself to Borchard's for breakfast, accompanied by Herr von Frohberg, who intended to see him to the door.

"Don't you paint the devil on the wall," the latter whispered to him. "Your wife is a wonderfully well-preserved woman. She might actually be taken for an elder sister of your two daughters."

The commercial counsellor stopped once more.

"You are right, Frohberg," he whispered back. "My Emma is really a charming wife. You ought to see her now, after the sea-baths she took at Ostende. You will scarcely recognize her; she looks so well and strong. Do you know," he added, lowering his voice still more and drawing his friend closer to him, so that he could talk directly into his ear, "what Madame Baldrian said to me? Some time ago I met her at a friend's house; she took me aside and whispered to me. 'Look here, my good little Miller, it will not be so easy for you to marry off your daughters. Do you want to know why?' 'Well, why?' I asked. 'Because everything is pos-

sible with you and your little wife,' she replied, 'and the prospects of their being your sole heirs is less certain now.' What do you say to that? Pretty good, isn't it? Now I must go, though, and get my breakfast, otherwise I will not be able to digest it before dinner. Don't fail to come and spend a week with us, as you promised."

He was just about to grasp the door-knob, when his gaze fell upon Rarrer, who had meanwhile taken leave of Madame von Frohberg and was preparing to follow the little man.

"Come with me to Borchard's, young man, and I'll give you a good breakfast," said he, in a jovial tone. "Be my guest this time, you sha'n't regret it. Although you took away my chair and caused me to fall, but as you didn't do it intentionally, I forgive you. I didn't catch your name, though," he added, reflecting that he was unable to address him by name.

Rarrer pinched his eyelids together tightly, and opened his mouth for the purpose of pronouncing his cognomen.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed the commercial counsellor. "You don't wish to bite me, do you? Better wait till we get to Borchard's; you will get something better there."

Thus saying, he nodded once more, pleasantly, to those present, took Rarrer's arm, and departed.

"Capital fellow, that Miller," said Frohberg, after the two gentlemen left the room. "He is full of jokes and pleasantries. I laugh when I only look at him."

The legation secretary finally came out from the window niche, but said not a word.

"I hope he will marry his daughters well," continued Frohberg; "they are charming and well brought up girls, both of them. But, nowadays,

that forms no guaranty for matrimonial happiness. It is money that people marry for now."

"That certainly cannot be said of you," remarked the legation secretary.

Madame von Frohberg trembled slightly at the sound of that voice.

"No, indeed, that cannot be said of me," said the master of the house, casting a loving glance upon his wife, who did not dare to look up, as if she feared to encounter the eye of her brother-in-law, which she supposed was constantly directed upon her. "I made an exception from the general rule, and married a girl without fortune, but who brought me more valuable treasures, that will afford me joy for a longer time, than high-sounding titles and bags of gold."

The young wife seemed to be more oppressed than elated by the praise of her husband.

"Are you as well pleased with me? Do you prize and respect me as highly as I do you?" asked von Frohberg, coming close to his wife.

She did not answer, but simply placed her trembling hand in his.

The legation secretary seemed to be waiting for something that was slow in coming, for he walked up and down the room restlessly, and cast an impatient look upon his brother, as if wishing he should withdraw.

Just then the door was opened, and the servant announced "Madame Baldrian!"

The legation secretary made a movement of impatience, and the lady of the house rose up and asked, lowly, of her husband:

"Shall we receive her this morning?"

"Certainly," answered von Frohberg. "Her motives are doubtless good and friendly; she comes to congratulate you, I presume. Moreover, we are indebted to her for our happiness."

"I shall be happy to see her," the beautiful lady said, turning to the servant, although the expression of her countenance denoted the contrary.

The servant disappeared, and a moment later Madame Baldrian sailed into the room.

The lady was probably thirty-eight or forty years old, perhaps older, or, again, also younger. It is no easy matter to estimate the exact age in the fair sex, because the evidences of nature are often totally masked by the beauty of the individual. And no one would be so ungallant as to ask a lady her age; nor, if he did so, would he obtain reliable information. Perhaps a tolerably near guess may be made by adopting the following mathematical table: If a lady says she is eighteen years old, or less, you may subtract two from the figures given, and you will have her exact age, for the young things would like to be judged older than they are. If she gives her age as between twenty and twenty-five, add two years to the amount; between twenty-five and thirty, add four years; between thirty and forty, add eight years; between forty and fifty, add ten years; between fifty and sixty, vanity ceases to dominate her breast, and veneration and respectability is merged in the grandmother, who permits herself to be adulated like a family deity by the children and children's children.

Madame Baldrian, then, might have been thirty-eight, more or less, and might still have been called a handsome woman.

Her form was of medium size, and, although she could no longer boast of the elasticity and buoyancy of youth, still her figure was plump and finely developed, without deforming the natural and symmetrical outlines. When she walked, her mortal substance constantly shook and trembled like jelly that was just put on the table. She had black hair and

eyes; the latter were full of life and animation, and also of observation. She could take in, at a glance, the entire situation, and readily make her calculations for consummating any and every combination that came within the sphere of her function.

Aside from that, her face, which was generally flushed from excitement, and which was capable of expressing the various human emotions, denoted an unusual degree of amiability, which always awakened the confidence of those that came in contact with her.

Her toilet was elegant, though somewhat loud, causing her to be noticed wherever she appeared—which, however, may have been just what she desired.

Madame Baldrian, then, sailed into the room like a ship with all sails set, and steered directly toward Madame von Frohberg, without taking the least notice of the others present, and embraced her.

"My dear Annie," she gasped, kissing her repeatedly, "accept my heartiest, best wishes. Excuse me—I am—so—affected——"

Thus saying, she released Madame von Frohberg, wiped away an imaginary tear from her left eye with an elegant batiste handkerchief, rumpled her bangs with a dexterous movement of her right hand, turned about, and greeted the two brothers with one bow, in which she essayed to be graceful, roguish, and bashful, like a young vixen.

"Did not your ears ring, my dear Madame Baldrian?" asked the older brother, pleasantly, addressing himself to the founder of his domestic happiness. "We have been talking a good deal about you."

"Well, I hope you said something good of me," said Madame Baldrian, making Herr von Frohberg a special bow, and looking at him in an affectionate and confidential manner.

"What can one say," remarked her former client, "but what is good of a lady who devotes herself to the achievement of the happiness of her fellow-man, and who is capable of wedding the sun to the moon!"

Madame von Frohberg invited the visitor to be seated with a motion of her hand, which Madame Baldrian instantly accepted, and sat down beside her upon the sofa, while the brothers seated themselves opposite to the ladies.

"You are very kind," returned Madame Baldrian, after she had comfortably arranged herself, "but what you are disposed to praise in me is due less to me than to my calling—a mission, I might say—which I have to fulfil upon this earth, and which the Creator has assigned to me. This mission is undoubtedly brimful of happiness for that portion of humanity who have any dealings with me; for myself, however, aside from the pleasure which I certainly enjoy from my labors, it is tainted with much bitterness and difficulties, of which the outsider can form no idea at all; for such clients as you were, my dear Frohberg, are rare and form an exception. The world is getting constantly worse, I declare. Nowadays, a young man who has twenty thousand dollars wants a girl with forty thousand, and the girl who has forty thousand wants a man with eighty or a hundred thousand. How is one, I ask you, to make a match when people have such conflicting desires? If this state of things should last much longer, it will, I fear, lead to the destruction of the world! It is really sad to contemplate the condition of things!"

"Yes, indeed!" rejoined the older Frohberg, earnestly, as the lady paused for a moment to take breath.

"These unhappy circumstances make my mission

so difficult," went on the matrimonial agent, "that the spirit of any other woman would have been wrecked long ago, owing to the difficulties of the task. The matrimonial candidates grow less and less every day. What shall I say of you, for instance, my dear legation secretary," she said, suddenly turning to the younger Frohberg; "I am beginning to despair of you."

"I fear you are right, madame," replied the legation secretary, seriously and coldly. "You see I am already too old to marry, for I am now past thirty-five."

"There you have it!" exclaimed the matchmaker, shrugging her plump shoulders. "The old excuse! They are all alike! Before they are thirty-five they are too young, and when over thirty-five they are too old to marry. How is one to find the precise moment that will suit them, I'd like to know?"

Then she cast a look full of tenderness at the legation secretary, and in a seductively sweet voice, said:

"Come, now, my dear Hermann, don't be so perverse; don't aggravate my task, which, as you know, is already hard enough. Once you will have to do it, you know that very well; so what is the use of waiting and postponing it? You will not get younger by waiting, and in youth, as you know, one enjoys the pleasures of love best. Remember the words of the immortal bard:

'The moments that are gone
No idle wishes can return.'

The joys of youth have never been regretted, is an old saying, and when all the wise men of the world say so, then it must be so. I say it is sheer folly for one to butt against fate. Come, now, my dear

friend," she said, coaxingly, " be sensible and take my advice."

The legation secretary shook his head and smiled seriously.

"You are a dreadful man," Madame Baldrian went on, casting a despairing look toward the ceiling. "I have something very nice for you, something that would just suit you, too; and you would not have to look for it very far, either. Such instances are always to be preferred, for the old saying is: 'Take a wife from the vicinity, and relations from over the sea;' or, 'he who weds a neighbor's child secures happiness untold;' or, 'he who takes a wife from afar, will find his hearth bare;' or, 'marry her from the neighborhood and you'll know whether she is good.' I can't think of any more maxims just at present to make the matter plausible to you, but these I think will do. Shall I tell you, at least, where you can find that pretty dove?"

"You may, if you like," said the legation secretary, in the hope of putting an end to more sayings, at least.

"In Charlottenburg," responded the hymeneal agent, literally swelling with joy at finding that the young man had been listening to her, and that he manifested so much interest as to express a desire to know more about the matter; "a droschki or the horse-cars will take you to the house in a very short time."

The legation secretary smiled.

"Aha, my young friend," said the instigator of marriages, "I thought I could rouse your feelings! Would you also like to know who the young lady is?"

The legation secretary nodded.

"The daughter of Commercial Counsellor Miller," whispered the match-maker, as if imparting

a highly important secret. "The eldest daughter, especially, is a most charming young lady, and would just suit you, my dear Hermann."

"That is true," chimed in the older Frohberg, addressing himself to his brother; "Louise is an excellent girl, and you have known her since she was a mere child."

A shade of seriousness overspread the earnest face of the legation secretary, and he was unable to suppress a sigh.

"What are you thinking of?" said he, repellingly, to his brother. "Louise is much too young for me, and moreover, I do not believe that she thinks at all of marrying as yet."

"Ah, child, you are altogether mistaken on that point," said the matrimonial agent, laughingly. "Girls think of matrimony an hour after they are born; and I'll prove it to you. You know that they begin to play with dolls before they are able to walk; the doll is their child, and they are the mothers. Now, if they begin to play mother before they are a year old, they certainly must have thought of getting married immediately after they were born. Is not that good logic? Our little Louisa thinks of putting on the wedding veil just as much as any other daughter of Eve."

The legation secretary was becoming somewhat restless, a fact which he vainly sought to hide by apparent coldness of manner.

"If she really——," he began, but stopped abruptly and cast a searching glance at Madame Baldrian.

"Don't forget, my dear Hermann," the latter proceeded, declamatorily, like a professor, "that a girl, according to her own views, is never too young to marry. You have not studied the spirit of the times. Nowadays everything is driven by steam,

and the same is true of matrimony. Let me relate to you a few instances that have occurred quite recently:

"A little fellow with a satchel upon his back comes out of the Friedrich-Wilhelm school, and espies a beautiful little girl on the opposite side of the way with her school-bag on her arm, coming from the Elizabeth seminary. His heart begins to beat wildly, and, with his face flushed, he follows the little charmer on her way home, near the Thiergarten. In an unfrequented alley my little Adonis takes heart, gains the left side of the little Venus, and sighs. She looks at him with big eyes, in which he detects ample evidences of sympathy. Thus encouraged he becomes bolder, and with a trembling voice, which is music to her ears, he mutters: 'Oh, what happiness, miss, to be permitted to wander through this world by your side!' 'Speak with my father!' gasps the charming little maid, bashfully casting down her eyes. 'When?' cries the youth, impetuously attempting to seize her hand. 'Oh, you mustn't be so hasty,' returns she, retreating a step; 'after I am confirmed.' And after that the little beauty continues on her way with light feet, while the boy, with a heavy heart, retraces his footsteps hastily,—so as not to be late at dinner.

"Take another sign of the times:

"A friend of mine, the mistress of a boarding-school, lately told me confidentially that all her scholars, even to the smallest, have their young cavaliers, whose likenesses they wear in medallions, and who call for them when school is out, and see them home; and that one class, in a body, declared that they could not associate with one of its members because she had no intended as yet.

"From these facts you will admit, my dear Frohberg," said Madame Baldrian, "that Louisa does not

consider herself too young to marry. Ask Wanda, her younger sister, and see what she will say. Let a nice young man propose to her, and I'll guarantee you she will clutch him with both hands."

"Well, if Wanda is in such a hurry, then begin with Wanda," said the legation secretary, laughingly. "It is not absolutely necessary for the eldest to be the first."

"Certainly not!" replied the match-maker. "First come, first served. I am, in fact, also on the lookout for the youngest," she added, with a self-satisfied smile. "It would be unpardonable in me if I were to neglect that beautiful creature."

The legation secretary stood up and passed his hand across his forehead.

"This woman is a veritable she-devil!" he murmured to himself, starting to walk up and down the room with long and hasty strides.

"I had pretty hot work this week," began the match-maker, emitting a whistling sound, as if she still felt the heat she experienced at that time. "In the first place, I almost brought about the marriage of Herr—now, what is his name? He is one of your friends, Frohberg. I cannot recall it just at present."

"Do you mean Privy Counsellor, Dr. Staberow?" asked the older Frohberg.

"Oh, bother with your privy counsellor," returned the matrimonial agent, repellingly with her hand. "Why, that is an old affair. I mean, an altogether different party. Now, what is his name?"

"Mayhap it is Solicitor von Collin?" suggested Frohberg.

"No!" said the lady; "that is still the 'music of the future.' This case is not quite ready to be closed. No, I mean still another. I have to carry about so many names in my head that I sometimes forget one. He is one of your intimate friends."

"One of our intimate friends?" asked Madame von Frohberg, who till then had been totally silent.

"Yes, certainly!" rejoined the marriage manufacturess, rubbing her forehead as if to stimulate her memory.

"I cannot think of anyone," said Madame von Frohberg.

"He is a tall, handsome man, of *distingué* bearing," said the match-maker, greatly provoked at being unable to recall the name. "You ought to be able to guess whom I mean, seeing that you have not a very large circle of friends."

The eyes of the legation secretary rested alternately, first upon his brother and then upon his sister-in-law, in such a penetrating manner as if he would tear the name out of either's mind.

"I cannot think of anyone," began the elder brother, after a period of silence, "unless it is Baron Branco."

"That is it!" exclaimed the matrimonial agent, emphatically, nodding her head repeatedly. "Indeed, I found Baron Branco to be one of the most willing and agreeable clients that I ever had. He might serve as an example to others!" she added, insinuatingly, with a glance at the younger Frohberg.

Madam von Frohberg turned deathly pale at the statement of Madame Baldrian, while the gaze of the legation secretary, which hitherto had rested so piercingly and so persistently upon her countenance, was now sadly cast down to the floor.

The older Frohberg only kept looking at the match-maker, who still continued to nod at him.

"I never would have believed it!" said he; "he has evidently kept the whole affair very quiet."

"Everything that is entrusted to my hands is kept a profound secret," said the promoter of marriages,

proudly, sitting bolt upright in the chair, albeit she had just divulged the secret of her client in the most flagrant and gossipy manner.

Madame von Frohberg, after a short but determined struggle, had regained full control over herself. Curiosity conquered the pain she felt.

"Are you sure of what you have just said about Baron Branco?" she asked, addressing herself, with great self-control, to Madame Baldrian.

"Yes," the latter replied. "I am positive, for I conducted the negotiations personally."

Madame von Frohberg sank her head for a moment.

"May one know the name of his intended?" she asked, after a moment's silence, anxiously looking up.

The matrimonial agent elevated her eyebrows, and shook her head negatively.

"We are not quite so far," said she, with a repelling movement of her hand. "The name of the lady must not be mentioned as long as there is the least shadow of a doubt."

"The affair is then, as yet, still in the prospective?" asked the lady of the house, with some animation.

"Excuse me," rejoined the matrimonial agent. "There is a great difference between an almost-decided project and a prospective affair. But it will not do to mention the young lady's name too soon. The gentleman's name may be mentioned as early as you please, since, if the project fails, it can do him no harm, while to the lady it may be a matter of serious consequences. Though it is no actual disgrace, still it always leaves a stain upon her name; and people are ever afterward apt to say, 'that is the young lady that was engaged to so-and-so.' But please do not misunderstand me, my friends," added Madame Baldrian, having become

anxious all at once; "what I have just said is not intended to convey the idea that the affair is at all uncertain; it is only from prudential reasons that I withhold the lady's name. I exercise the same precaution in every case. I may add that I have every reason to believe that the project will shortly be happily consummated. I must go now, my friends," she added, suddenly rising from the sofa and beginning to smooth the wrinkles of her silk gown with her hands, thumping a certain part of her attire behind.

"Oh!" said the elder Frohberg, with social regret, "must you go so soon, my dear Madame Baldrian?"

"Yes, I must!" exclaimed the match-maker, in a voice that was full of importance and resignation. "Do I live for myself? Am I the mistress of my own time? No. I am overwhelmed with business. And to-day, especially, I have so much to do that I know not where to begin and where to end. I have appointments with six mothers who have daughters to marry."

The legation secretary walked up and down the back part of the room, the others were standing not far from the visitor.

"Do not overtax yourself, my dear Madame Baldrian," said the elder Frohberg. "So much exertion is altogether too much for a delicate constitution like yours."

The matrimonial agent threatened him jestingly with her finger.

"Oh, you bad man, you," she said; "you are making merry at my expense, though you are indebted to me for your happiness."

The older brother pressed her hand in his heartily and gratefully.

"Adieu, my dear!" exclaimed the match-maker,

falling upon Annie's bosom, and giving vent to her pent-up feelings. "I hope to see you again soon, very soon. Adieu, Frohberg," she said, returning the previous pressure of the hand; "think of me occasionally in the hours of your bliss. That is about all I can expect and look for, after all my trouble and anxiety. Adieu, you old ice-bear!" she added, turning to the legation secretary, who bowed to her coldly. "You may look as sour as you like, but marry you will as sure as my name is Madame Baldrian."

After nodding to Annie once more, she sailed out of the room as majestically as she entered it, vehemently protesting all the while against the intention of the master of the house to accompany her to the door.

"What a good-natured woman that Madame Baldrian is," remarked the older Frohberg, on returning to the room.

"Yes, she has a veritable mania for marrying everybody," remarked Hermann von Frohberg, incisively.

His brother did not reply, but looked at his watch, and, turning to his wife, said:

"It is high time for you to go and dress yourself, if we are to go to the races to-day."

Madame von Frohberg shook her head negatively.

"Excuse me, Karl, I must stay home," said she; "my head aches very much. I think the odor of these flowers caused my headache."

"Then go to your room and lie down awhile, dear," said her husband, anxiously, "and you will soon be better. I will stay home and keep you company."

The young wife suddenly became greatly alarmed.

"No, no," she replied, quickly. "I will not listen to it; I will not allow it. The races afford you a

great deal of pleasure, and you will certainly go, unless you want to vex me."

"Am I to go to the races on your birthday without you? Never!" said the gallant husband.

"Very well, then," replied Annie, becoming more and more restless. "Since you compel me to go with you, I'll do so, but if my indisposition should increase it will be your fault."

"You little tyrant, you!" said Frohberg. "In the end I always do just as you wish. Now, since Annie wishes it, I'll go for an hour or two," said he, addressing himself to his brother. "Will you come with me, Hermann?"

The legation secretary seemed somewhat annoyed by the invitation; he made an involuntary movement with his hand, as if it would interfere with the plan he had formed; but he did not answer. He cast another glance upon his sister-in-law, who, with reddened cheeks and feverish impatience, seemed to await the going of the two gentlemen, and then, having suddenly formed a new resolution, he said:

"Yes, I'll go with you; come along!"

"Farewell, darling," said the older Frohberg, kissing his wife tenderly; "I'll be back soon, but you must be well when I come back, do you hear, dearest?"

The legation secretary bowed to his sister-in-law pleasantly, and then the two brothers left the room.

Barely did Annie find herself alone, when her self-restraint gave way at once.

She brushed back the hair from her hot temples with her small and white hands, and then began to wring the latter, till they became red and hot, and with hasty strides walked up and down the room, breathing hurriedly, her bosom heaving vehemently.

"At last, at last, I am alone!" she gasped, in an

almost hoarse whisper. "Oh, heavens, how I have suffered! How my soul was racked since I heard what that woman said! Oh, the men, the men! None of them, none of them, are faithful!"

The young woman spoke these words with painfully profound conviction, but she forgot that she might have said with still greater justice: "Oh, the women, the women! They do not deserve such excellent and loving husbands, for they do not value a true and faithful heart, and are ever ready to barter it for one that is vain and selfish, which only seeks pleasure, and wants to divert itself with them."

But Passion is blind, and sees only the faults of others, deeming its own reprehensible desires to be virtues.

But Justice is vigilant, and punishes a person with his own sins.

"I must lose no time now," Madame von Frohberg continued; "I must avail myself of the absence of the gentlemen. I'll write to him, and see what he has to say for himself; what excuses he has to offer."

While speaking, she had seated herself at a writing-desk, arranged a sheet of paper, and seized a pen.

"But what if he does not come?" she murmured to herself, stopping after she had written a few lines. "However, I do not think he will dare to do that," she quickly added; "he will not dare to insult me thus."

She wrote more and more, quickly blotted the wet sheet, folded it hurriedly, enclosed it in an envelope, and after addressing it, rang the bell, in feverish haste, that stood upon the writing-desk.

Barely had the tones of the bell subsided when the door was opened, and instead of a servant, the legation secretary entered.

"Here, take this note quickly to the person addressed," exclaimed the lady, handing it to the pre-

sumable servant, who quickly advanced, took the letter out of her hand, and, after casting a hasty glance upon the superscripture, put it into his breast-pocket.

The lady turned around and beheld her brother-in-law, as he was in the act of putting her letter into his pocket. For a moment she stared at him, as if she had seen a ghost; then she turned deathly pale, sank back upon her seat, and covered her face with her hands.

"My suspicions were correct, it seems," he said in an earnest manner, after a long silence, gazing upon the cowering and shivering lady.

"I am lost!" she groaned.

The legation secretary made no reply. He was evidently lost in thought.

The lady regarded his silence as a confirmation of her harrowing supposition, sprang up like a flash of lightning, grasped her brother-in-law's hands, and, in accents of despair, exclaimed:

"Then you intend to tell your brother everything, Hermann?"

The legation secretary looked her long and earnestly in the eye. She bore his look unflinchingly, because fear and hope were just then stronger in her than shame, and she hoped to detect a sign of safety in his gaze.

"No," he said, at last, "I will not inform my brother of this affair; the knowledge of it would kill him, or at least destroy his future happiness and peace of mind. But the baron shall answer to me."

Annie, who began to see a ray of hope in his first few words, relapsed, through his last remark, into a state of fear and mental disturbance bordering on desperation.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Hermann, don't challenge the baron!" she sobbed, wringing her hands;

"that will do no one any good; the scandal will become the talk of the day, and my suffering and shame will be all the more."

"My brother's shame, you mean," said the legation secretary, sadly. "But you are right; I must give up that thought."

"You promise to do that?" she exclaimed, riveting her gaze upon the lips of her brother-in-law.

"I promise," he replied, "upon one condition."

"And that is?" asked Annie, seized with a new fear.

"That you will leave Berlin with your husband, and take up your residence in your country house," replied the legation secretary.

Annie sank her head upon her breast, and a tear rolled down her cheek.

"I agree," said she, after briefly reflecting, giving him her hand, which he took in his. A load seemed to have been lifted off her brother-in-law, for he breathed a sigh of relief.

"I thank you in the name of my brother," spoke the legation secretary, much affected, in a low voice. "It is still time to save him and yourself. The sad discovery which I have made to-day is only another instance of a thoughtless marriage, such as occurs nowadays. A rich, honorable, and exceedingly kind, but elderly, man marries a poor, young, but very pretty, girl. The fool thinks, that by his boundless love and exceeding kindness, he will win her love, but he forgets that love is not purchasable, not even for the most valuable attributes of the heart and mind. In her eyes these are simply qualities that amuse her, instead of affording her joy. She, therefore, soon casts the pearls that were offered her aside."

Annie sobbed as if her heart would break.

"The young wife at first was not bad, but weak

and frivolous," continued the legation secretary, "though she knew that she was her husband's life-joy. He was deceived, for he only received spurious jewels in exchange for his genuine ones. For a time external appearances are maintained. Presently the tempter appears, who misleads her——"

Madame von Frohberg looked up at him with such a supplicating look that he stopped.

"Is it still time?" asked the legation secretary, with a softer voice.

"Yes!" she answered in a firm voice, that convinced him that she spoke the truth.

"Then, farewell, and may God strengthen you in your resolution!" said Hermann von Frohberg, in a voice trembling with emotion. "I must go back to Karl, who is waiting for me. Say nothing to him of what has occurred between us."

Annie nodded her head.

"But you will remove to your country residence—that is settled," added the legation secretary; "or, if you prefer it, travel with Karl for a time. A change of scene will be a diversion for you, and will allow your wound to heal. I have your promise?"

"You may rely upon it," said his sister-in-law, firmly; "but I have yours also, Hermann?"

"Fear not; I will not provoke the baron to fight," he assured her.

He then took out the letter from his pocket and handed it to her.

"Take this," he said. "The stone that you were about to hurl at yourself has failed to harm you."

Annie took the letter and quickly thrust it into her pocket, as if afraid to expose it to the light of day.

"Adieu!" said he, extending his hand. Annie put her hand into his, and in the next moment he left the room.

She immediately retired to her own apartment, where she sat down upon a low stool, took her head in her hands, and thus remained for a whole hour.

When at last she got up, a mild degree of sadness was pictured in her countenance.

She had buried one love, but upon its fresh grave a few tender green shrubs already sprouted—the first shoots of better and purer hopes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.

Major Rumpel sat by the window in his room and made awful faces. Indeed, he was always in the habit of doing this, but whenever he became excited a little more than usual he made still more hideous grimaces, which attracted the attention of everyone that passed by; but to-day they looked at him and smiled.

Had Major Rumpel seen it he would no doubt have put his head out of the window and given them a good scolding; for he allowed no one to laugh at him. Fortunately, however, he did not notice it, as he was completely absorbed in the book which he had been reading for more than an hour, and which he kept close to his nose, as if he was resolved to set it on fire with his black, glistening eyes.

Major Rumpel was still *en négligé*, if it were proper to say so, for all the difference that could be seen in his costume consisted in his wearing an old military cap while at home, which was replaced by a high silk hat when he went out.

He was accustomed, while in the service, to dress in full uniform early in the morning on rising, a habit which he retained to the present day. Dressing-gowns and slippers are never in great favor with such iron constitutions as his.

If some innocent young creature had suddenly come into the major's apartment, she would undoubtedly have trembled greatly, just as she would have blushed on entering unprepared an artist's *atelier*.

That would have been due to the not only military, but warlike, arrangement of the room. Over the old leather sofa upon which the major took his afternoon *siesta*, when his domestic affairs permitted him to do so, was suspended a large oil-painting of the battle of Waterloo, which he had helped to win, and of which he was so proud that he had it painted by some local genius at a cost of ten dollars.

Hence the picture was just what one might have expected it to be.

In the centre of the field Napoleon could be seen sitting upon a cherry-colored horse, and looking so fierce and threatening that one became dreadfully frightened by merely looking at him.

The old gentlemen who sometimes visited the major, when their domestic affairs permitted them to do it, were always of the opinion that there never were any cherry-colored horses, and that the picture was not accurately painted. This always provoked him, and he would explain to them that that was only the reflection from the flames of the burning villages, which they could see plainly in the background, and out of which old Blücher came galloping, flourishing his sword, and which was longer than the entire form of Napoleon in the centre of the field.

On the other walls there were similar improbable lithographs and woodcuts, which formerly were incorporated in a calendar, and which represented scenes from the wars of independence, or the heroes thereof.

The moment of the battle chosen and the action were pictured with such accuracy and minutiæ of detail, that the scene looked more like one from Dante's Inferno; and the combatants had such sinister and murderous looks that a nervous person with a lively

imagination would have expected, on entering the room, to smell blood.

Upon a small table there stood a wooden pedestal, made especially for the purpose of supporting something that might have been looked upon both as a trophy and as a symbol of the major's former military life.

Upon the head of the afore-mentioned pedestal dangled, somewhat obliquely, the decorated shako of the major, which was now covered with a thick layer of gray dust, as if it had but just come off the hot battlefield.

One stage lower the three-cornered gala hat of the major was likewise suspended, upon a similar knob, whose high undulating plume the housekeeper made use of every Saturday, as a feather-duster.

To the right and left of these two head-gears, the major's large epaulettes, with their silver cantilles, were seen hanging like a pair of red-breasted bullfinches, who by mistake had allowed themselves to be entrapped.

Between these objects the major's green sash was seen gracefully twisted, like the Laocoon between the snakes, as a sad reminder of the time when he was at the zenith of his strength and greatness.

It always made old Rumpel feel sad when he looked at his sash with its silver tassels, and found it becoming thinner and shorter.

"It is the tooth of time that is consuming it, as well as everything else on earth!" Major Rumpel would say, with a sigh.

He was mistaken; it was not the tooth of time, but the fingers of his housekeeper, who resorted to it whenever she needed a thread to sew on a button with.

Yes, if one always knew the origin of things,

how devoid of poetry the world of thought would be! how vacant memory would be!

Overhanging the whole group of relics was the major's sword, suspended on a thin frail cord, like the sword of Damocles. He carried it on his hip from the day he entered the service till he left it, and with it he smote the enemies of his fatherland.

The old sword was covered with reddish-black rust, and partly withdrawn from its scabbard, for the purpose of showing a large dark stain formed by the blood of a giant cuirassier, whom the major had stabbed to death.

Whenever Major Rumpel looked at the bloody stain, he would twist his long black mustache, cast a triumphant look upon Napoleon, who with his elevated shoulders sat upon the cherry-colored charger, and then, like a conqueror, he would proudly strut up and down his room.

The finale of the relics, constituting the trophies on the wall, was an old pair of rusty pistols that hung near the bloody sword like a pair of mute destroyers.

Once upon a time, in the hands of the major, they caused the enemy fear and terror; now his housekeeper took them down and handled them fearlessly—indeed she did not hesitate to use them in place of a hammer, for the purpose of driving a nail in the wall or to smooth a dent in an old kettle, which to the major, had he known it, would have been a veritable desecration.

And was it not so with Major Rumpel himself? Was he not like the dusty shako, the old rusty sword, and the desecrated pistols?

Was he not in days gone by a living sword in the hands of the commander, a firebrand to the enemy, whom he courageously charged, and a hundred times scattered like chaff before the wind?

And now, when he sat by the window and expressed his displeasure at what he read in his own way, the passers-by laughed at him; or when he walked in the street with the old soldierly step, the small boys ran after him; or when he came to the Club of the Old Gentlemen, and, in the voice with which he once commanded his battery, ordered the waiter to bring him a cup of coffee, all the ladies present, young and old, snickered, though they pretended to be busily engaged drinking their coffee and making fancy work.

"To what base uses we come to, Horatio!" said Hamlet, viewing the skull which the grave-digger had cast up.

Charles the Great was a mighty monarch, and wore a golden crown upon his holy head, upon which no one dared to lay a profane hand.

But now his skeleton has been taken apart, the greater part of the bones have been packed in a silver chest, his dried arms are encased in gold, and his mighty skull up to a round point framed in silver, which makes it look like a catholic tonsure, and which the priests in the cathedral in Aix la Chapelle allow everyone to touch who is disposed to do so.

And the mighty golden crown, which erstwhile sat upon that silver-covered skull, the priest now claps on the head of any churl who will give him ten cents.

"To what base uses we come to, Horatio!"

In his apartment, as described above, Major Rumpel sat and made queer faces, and the people who saw him laughed and passed on.

The reason why he made such grimaces was the book which he had been reading for more than an hour, and which he held so close to his nose as to lead one to think that he wanted to set it on fire with his black, brilliant eyes.

It was a description of the battle of Waterloo, which Victor Hugo had sandwiched into his romance "Les Misérables," for the purpose of making the book thicker, for the battle had nothing to do with the story.

This most remarkable description of all battles of Waterloo was the only one which Major Rumpel had not yet read, and hearing the members of the club speak of it, he hastened to procure it at the library, and was just then engaged in perusing it.

He had reached that famous part relating to the Pass of Ohain, which the emperor is said to have overlooked, although he was aware of the existence of every tree, every bush, and every rock upon the entire battlefield—which makes it hard to comprehend where he got such a large map and how he managed to handle it. The French cuirassiers, under the command of Milhaud, started at a gallop—a magnificent sight, moving like a living iron wall—flourishing their swords against the English line, which was prepared to receive these terrible warriors. But the French cuirassiers were perfectly indifferent to it; they galloped onward, brandishing their flashing swords determinedly, and every now and again cried: *Vive l'Empereur!* because they had become accustomed to do it. They rode in squadrons, a countless number behind each other. All at once—it was not yet dark—the advance column tumbled into the chasm of Ohain, which the emperor had overlooked, and which they therefore did not think it worth while to pay any attention to.

The first squadron was followed by the second, the second by the third, and so on till the entire chasm of Ohain was completely filled up with French cuirassiers. Hence it must have been a pretty wide chasm.

Half of Milhaud's iron riders lay in the ditch.

The other half, however, was not to be deterred by this mishap in the least, but continued to trot on calmly, with their bright swords flashing in the sunlight, again and again shouting *Vive l'Empereur!* over the struggling, kicking, moaning, and groaning mass of men and horses as they lay in this terrible chasm, and arrived at the designated point in good order, and attacked the English line on the opposite side, who had witnessed this heroic act with surprise and horror.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed Major Rumpel, striking the window-sill with his left fist so violently that the panes shook, and pulled down the old military cap which he wore till it was perched upon his eyebrows. "Thunder and lightning! I never knew this before. However old a man grows he still learns something. But what murderous fellows those cuirassiers must have been! The cavalry of the present day is totally incapable of doing such a thing. It is only the men of the olden times that had iron in their blood and souls. Those of the present day are a slavish and effeminate race!"

Then the major read further, how the French cavalry fought with the English. Neither retreated a step; both stood like walls of stone, yet continued to mow down each other unceasingly; the horses reared, the swords clashed, and the French again and again cried *Vive l'Empereur!* till they were finally compelled to yield, and were driven back over the ditch near Ohain, in which a large number of their comrades were still struggling.

The old major, from sheer excitement, had pulled his ancient military cap still more over his eyes, and looked so fierce that those that passed by now did not laugh at him any more, but were frightened.

Suddenly a loud, hoarse, guttural sound was heard from a room back of that occupied by the major.

Involuntarily the major drew in his right leg, with the intention of rising from his chair, and was about to put down the book.

On second thought, however, he stopped, reflected for another moment, suddenly made a face like a spoiled child that is bent upon being obstinate, stretched out his leg again, and began to read his book.

A few minutes later the same guttural noise was heard over again, but louder and longer.

The major started and shivered as if he had been caught doing something wrong, and again seemed disposed to get up.

But the opposing force was much stronger this time, the new description of the battle of Waterloo chained him with irresistible shackles upon the chair, and the heroic acts he read of infused his soul with a courage that nothing could daunt.

Major Rumpel continued to read.

Again a few minutes elapsed, and the knocking upon his door with despotic fingers was heard once more, causing the old soldier to start so violently that he almost jerked his left elbow through a pane of glass.

He was so absorbed in his story that he had to think for a moment whether it was not the rattle of a French drum-stick that he had heard; but when he succeeded in bringing his mind back to the present, he threw a partly anxious and partly determined look at the door of the adjacent room, struck a blow upon the window-sill with his left fist in a comically-spiteful manner, and muttered to himself, under his dyed, bushy, black mustache:

"She may go to the devil! I must first read through the battle of Waterloo!"

And Major Rumpel read on.

Before, however, he had reached the part where the Prussians gained Napoleon's left wing, the mysterious door was suddenly torn open and a female figure appeared on the threshold, who measured the major with looks expressive of the utmost surprise and vexation.

This female may have counted forty summers and as many winters, if not more, and was of such a massive and powerful stature that she might readily have been mistaken for a dragoon in female attire, with his beard cut off.

Her face was intensely red, her grayish eyes snapped spitefully from beneath the heavy eyebrows, and the full, thick lips trembled from excitement.

In addition, her morning cap was placed upon her head in such a warlike manner that it looked like a French cuirassier's helmet, with its horse-hair bush hanging down behind.

As this noble daughter of Eve entered the room, a shiver ran through the entire form of the major, as if he had been called upon to surrender by a hateful French cuirassier.

But whether it was the new description of the battle of Waterloo that infused so much courage into his soul to-day, or whether he took his housekeeper for one of those cuirassiers to whom he resolved never to surrender, he sat bolt-upright in his chair, determinedly kept the book in his hand, and encountered her gaze with the same calmness that he once displayed when the enemy's balls fell about his head like hail.

The lips of the major's cook began to tremble markedly, her fingers to twitch perceptibly, and the arched breast to heave as if disturbed by volcanic commotion.

"Herr Major!" she finally cried, in a voice hoarse from excitement.

"What is the matter?" asked Rumpel, calmly, as if nothing had happened.

"Didn't you hear me?" went on the housekeeper.

"What should I have heard?" growled Rumpel, looking in his book again.

"I notified you three times that dinner was ready," she answered.

"Indeed!" returned the major, phlegmatically. "I didn't hear; I was absorbed in my book."

To himself he murmured, accompanied by grating with his teeth:

"That's what this Satan means calling me to dinner, when she grunts like a sow, and drums on the door. She is a veritable pest——"

He, however, did not dare to prolong his reflections upon the qualities of his housekeeper, nor to express his discontent even to himself, for she now became alarmingly red in the face, and he wished to avoid becoming angry before the meal, for it always disturbed his digestion.

He, therefore, put down the new description of the battle of Waterloo, took off his old military cap, ran his hands through his dyed-black, bushy, hair, and then went into the adjoining little room, where covers were laid for two persons.

The major sat down at one side of the table, and the cook seated herself opposite to him.

"What kind of soup is this?" asked Rumpel, snuffing the steam arising from the soup-tureen as the cover was removed, and which diffused a peculiar aroma through the room.

"Oatmeal soup, with cinnamon," returned the housekeeper, dryly, handing him a plateful of the beverage.

For a moment Rumpel clinched his fists under the table, and was about to utter a very naughty word, but he reflected how injurious it was to get

angry before a meal, besides destroying his appetite; he, therefore, repressed his anger quickly, and, with only a slight touch of displeasure in his tone, said:

"You know very well that I detest oatmeal soup with cinnamon. Why do you cook it two and three times a week?"

"Because it is very healthy for you, Herr Major, and because I deem it my duty to care for your health," said the housekeeper, dryly and decisively.

"Things I dislike cannot be healthy for me," growled old Rumpel, shuddering from the odor of the soup, which he stirred contemptuously with the spoon.

"What sort of language is that you are using?" continued Augusta to her master. "Medicine does not taste nice either, and yet it is very healthy. One so well educated as you are ought to know that much."

"But I don't want any medicine as soup," murmured Major Rumpel, swallowing a spoonful of the beverage with a gulp, and making a wry face thereat.

"Besides, it is the cheapest and most nourishing kind," added the housekeeper.

"What care I how cheap it is, if I dislike it?" remonstrated Rumpel; "add a few cents to the cost of this soup and prepare the kind I like."

"Yes, add, always add!" retorted Augusta. "If things were managed according to your way we would not get very far, Herr Major."

"Well, I have quite a sum left every year from my pension," interjected the major, after swallowing another spoonful of soup much against his will.

"That is the way things ought to be managed in every well-regulated household," said the housekeeper, zealously. "It is right to be frugal and live economically. You ought to thank God, Herr Major, that I look after you, otherwise you would have been in debt over your ears long ago!"

Old Rumpel sighed and laid down his spoon. He did not wish to get angry, because it would spoil his appetite, and he would thus be unable to enjoy the second course.

"Well, are you not going to eat the soup that is good for your health?" asked the housekeeper, looking at the major's plate, which was still half full.

Rumpel first shook his head and then shuddered all over.

"Well, I never saw such a person as you are!" began the cook, clasping her hands. "You grow more and more queer every day, Herr Major! Refusing to eat the good food the Lord gives you! Why did I cook it if you do not want to eat it? I might have spared myself labor and money by not cooking it at all. I will not listen to any new notions, Herr Major. Eat your soup and be done with it!"

The major shuddered as if he had the ague, and shook his head despondingly.

The housekeeper began to get intensely red in the face, and in that ominously dry and determined voice of hers, which she effectually resorted to on similar occasions, said:

"Herr Major, you know me. If you do not eat your soup I will not bring in the second course!"

"But, Augusta, it sickens me to eat it," remonstrated the major.

"Bah! that is sheer nonsense!" quickly retorted the housekeeper. "I would like to see the man who would become ill after eating such soup as this! You are in bad humor to-day, that is all, and wish to annoy your faithful and honest servant, in return for her slavish devotion to you!"

"Yes, yes, we know all that," answered the major, who seemed to be forgetting the battle of

Waterloo. "But I think I have also the privilege——"

"If you do not eat your soup I'll take it away, but I will bring nothing else in," cried Augusta, in a dry, harsh voice.

The poor major's face assumed an expression as if a gimlet was being bored into his brain, shrugged his shoulders in mute resignation, and, with indescribable resolution began to swallow one spoonful of the soup after another, seemingly wholly indifferent to the nauseating taste of the beverage; but the wry face he made every time he gulped down a mouthful, and the cold perspiration that stood in beads upon his forehead, showed the torture he was undergoing.

"There!" said he, after swallowing the last mouthful. "Now bring in something else. B-r-r-r! what a horrible mixture this is!"

"Herr Major!" said Augusta, sharply, removing plates and soup tureen from the table. "Don't you find so much fault with the victuals. I might make you some not so good, I can assure you!"

After that she disappeared into the adjoining room, where she was heard rattling the dishes furiously.

"Accursed Satan!" growled the major, darting an angry look after his nurse. "I did not marry because I wanted to remain a free and independent man, and now I have fallen into the clutches of a virago, who has been tyrannizing over me and maltreating me these ten years. Oh, if I could only get rid of her! But I can't! After quarrelling in a manner that it seems to make it impossible for us to live together any longer, she begins to cry, and sobs so that my heart begins to ache, and I sue for peace. That is the way she attacks me, and in that way she always conquers me!"

The major sighed from the bottom of his heart, dropped his hands upon his lap and his head upon his breast, and stared vacantly upon the empty plate before him.

Presently the kitchen door was opened, and the cook appeared, bearing a steaming dish, which she hastily put down upon the table.

The major waked up from his day-dream and stretched out his neck. At the same time his face assumed a displeased expression, and he cast a look upon his housekeeper as if he would transfix her.

The faithful nurse had, however, encased herself in a cuirasse of stoical indifference and parried the major's look with an icy countenance.

"Augusta!" cried old Rumpel, running both hands through his bushy, black hair, so that he looked like a porcupine with its quills erect.

"Well, what provokes you now?" snorted the housekeeper. "As I said before, you are getting worse and worse every day. I think you ought to consult your doctor."

The major pointed with his long, lank finger at the steaming dish, as if it was a thing of evil, and in a voice that would have frightened anybody save his housekeeper, asked:

"What is that?"

"Don't you see what that is?" retorted the housekeeper, with the utmost calmness. "It is a pancake!"

"And after oat-meal soup you dare to give me a pancake?" cried the major.

"Well, and why not?" returned the cook, surprised. "When you get two such healthy dishes you certainly have no reason to complain."

"But I don't like either of them!" exclaimed the major. "You give me oat-meal soup instead of

bouillon, and when I expect some kind of roast you give me a sticky and flabby pancake which I detest!"

"When you get egg-pastry you can't expect any meat!" said Augusta, calmly but determinedly. "One egg is equal to half a pound of meat. In this pancake there are four eggs, and as you eat the larger part of it, you will consume three eggs, or a pound and a half of meat. I should think your stomach would be satisfied with it," added she, snarling.

"Be still!" cried the major, unable to bear it any longer. "In the first place, I do not consider an egg equal to half a pound of meat; in the second place, I never eat any pancake, as you know very well. And consequently, I not only do not get a pound and a half of meat, as you claim, but I get nothing at all! That is the long and short of it. Do you understand me?"

"My God, don't holloa so!" exclaimed the housekeeper, clapping her hands upon her ears. "It is a sin to allow such a beautiful pancake to go to waste!"

"It is your fault if the victuals go to waste!" cried old Rumpel, still louder. "Why do you cook things I detest?"

"But they are very healthy," also cried the housekeeper.

"There are certainly other kinds of food that taste good and are also healthy," growled the major.

"Many a poor man would only be too glad to get such good dishes as these!" said Augusta, casting a pitying look upon her pancake.

"But I am not a poor man!" exclaimed the major.

"You are a spendthrift, you are!" asserted the housekeeper, reproachfully.

"It is you who are the spendthrift!" retorted the major.

"I, a spendthrift?" cried Augusta, her countenance becoming red. "Yes, that was only lacking to make my cup of bitterness full—to be charged by you with being a spendthrift. I who work all day in order to make your old age comfortable to you; I who scarcely partake of enough food, and strive to the utmost to economize in every way possible; I, who lay awake all night and rack my brains to devise some healthy dish for you for the next days' meal. Oh, it is shameful! it is terrible!"

"But I do not eat merely for the sake of my health, I want to enjoy my meals, too!" cried the major.

"One can enjoy a pancake as well as anything else."

"I don't!"

"You only imagine so!"

"The devil——"

"Don't curse me, Herr Major, I am a good Christian!"

"You are a she-devil!"

"Will you eat the pancake or not?"

"No, to sheol with it!"

"Think of your health, old man!"

"If you are considerate about my health, then why do you vex me so dreadfully?"

The housekeeper, who was already livid in the face, now uttered a screech and carried her hand to her stomach.

"Aha!" growled the major, lowly, "now comes the cavalry attack, the first discharge of the battery having failed; but I am not to be intimidated to-day, under any circumstances."

"Oh!" groaned the housekeeper again, but more

painfully and more dolefully, beginning to sway herself back and forth, and seeking to grasp some support with her outstretched hands.

The major looked at her, somewhat alarmed.

"If she should fall now," said he to himself, "she might break a couple of bones in her body, and I would then have the pleasure of sitting by her bedside to nurse her. That would be pleasant, indeed!"

"Oh! Oh—h!" moaned the stout maiden, again, in a manner that penetrated to the very marrow of the old soldier; "how bad I feel! Help! h—e—l—p!"

After these exclamations she grated her teeth in a most harrowing manner, attempted to clutch at some support with her hands, and began to sway herself back and forth so fast that the major was no longer able to resist it, but with a bound reached her side, passed his arm around her waist, and then dragged the apparently lifeless form to the sofa, where he dropped his sweet burden.

"Whew! what a load!" ejaculated the old soldier, shaking his arm. "That is the kind of tortures one has to bear, because he will not eat oat-meal broth and pancakes!"

He gazed upon the form of his housekeeper, who lay with closed eyes and open mouth, her arms hanging down lifelessly, and her feet projecting beyond the edge of the sofa.

"This is the old story!" growled old Rumpel, shrugging his shoulders sadly. "I have never been able to resist this point of the attack, do what I might. If I could only withstand it once, then I might succeed in breaking my shackles forever. But one's strength is able to hold out only up to a given point," he added, resignedly, "and my strength never held out beyond the point of her falling. I know very well what will come next. After lying

in this condition for ten minutes, she will have convulsions, which will grow stronger and stronger, till I finally will be unable to bear it any longer, and will be obliged to humbly beg her to come to again, and promise her to do everything in the world if she will only forgive me. For a time she is contented, but the very next day things are as they were before."

The major cast a long and sad look upon the outstretched form of his faithful housekeeper.

"I presume I will have to choke down half of that beastly pancake," said he, in a painful voice. "Not even a kind Providence can save me from it! In addition, it has now become cold and sticky, and is likely to get stuck in one's gullet. The thought of it is enough to drive one crazy!"

Just then his eyes caught sight of the book he had been reading, and which was still lying open upon the table near the window.

The face of the major again assumed a joyous expression.

He dilated his chest, twisted his jet-black mustache, got his military cap, put it rakishly upon his head, and tiptoed carefully to his chair at the window, and commenced to read the description of the battle of Waterloo again, which had inspirited and encouraged him so before. Soon his face bore a warlike and contending expression, and in the zeal of the strife that was going on around him he entirely forgot his cook, who still lay, with closed eyes and open mouth, upon the sofa, as if dead.

Presently a loud crack was heard. Major Rumpel started and gazed in the direction of the sofa.

"H'm, h'm," growled he, lowly. "Now the spasms will begin."

Once more he became absorbed in his book.

Presently another crack was heard, but much louder than the former.

Major Rumpel now merely gazed in the direction whence the noise came.

"Aha! she is already jerking!" said the heartless Rumpel to himself. "This is the way she has always attacked my weakest point, my centre, and always broke it. But I'll take the English as an example. They stood like walls of stone. Thunder and lightning! what fellows they were! Let her jerk as much as she likes, for all I care."

Again he turned to his book and soon became absorbed in it.

But he had not read very far when such a terrible noise was heard, that the major started again, stopped reading his book, and looked in the direction of the noise.

The plump girl was affected with spasms in the severest manner, and with her outstretched legs constantly kicked at the table, which caused some of the dishes to fall off.

The major had became so brave through the reading of the account of the battle of Waterloo, that he simply cast a pitying and contemptuous look upon his lovely housekeeper.

"This is something altogether new!" he growled. "I declare, she is perfectly livid in the face; the affair lasts longer to-day than she contemplated; she is not used to it. Bah! Let her jerk as much as she pleases!" added the unfeeling man.

Again his looks wandered to his book and he was soon lost in it, when another sound, like that of an explosion, resounded through the room, causing the major to start up, frightened.

The fat Augusta was now lying upon the floor, still and motionless, having, in a final effort to kick over the table, slid down from the sofa, striking the boards with her head.

"Thunder and lightning!" muttered Rumpel,

who was now unconquerable, having taken example of the English in that famous battle he was reading of. "This was a brilliant attack; but it is a total failure. She may lie where she is! When she gets tired of it she can get up. I am resolved to break my shackles to-day forever!"

Again he turned to his excellent book, and read on for about half an hour longer, but nothing occurred to disturb his domestic peace in the least. He then closed his book, rubbed his eyes, and murmured to himself:

"This is a wonderful description of the battle of Waterloo! I must read it every day; it is of the utmost benefit to me!"

He began to blink with his eyes, wearily gaped several times, as if he wanted to dislocate his lower jaw, stretched himself, and muttered, quite contentedly:

"Got tired from reading so much; will take a nap before I go to the club. I have half an hour's time yet."

Thus saying, he walked past his amiable housekeeper unconcernedly, who was still lying upon the floor, stretched himself out upon the sofa, yawned several times, and then closed his eyes.

It was not very long before the fat Augusta opened her eyes cautiously, glanced stealthily around, and then carefully raised her head.

When she saw the major lying peacefully and comfortably upon the sofa, while he let her lie fainting upon the hard, cold floor, the fiery redness of anger overspread her fat face; with a quickness and agility no one would have given her credit for, she sprang to her feet like a panther attacking her prey, grasped the unconscious sleeper by both shoulders, and, in a voice loud enough to awaken the dead, yelled into his ears:

"Herr Major! Herr Major!"

Old Rumpel, who had but just fallen asleep, started and sat bolt-upright upon the sofa as if electrified, and in a dazed manner, and with sleepy eyes, stared at his antagonist as if he had seen a ghost.

"What do you want?" cried he, provoked in the highest degree, when at last he regained the power of speech.

"You don't intend to sleep to-day, do you?" cried Augusta, disregarding the defeat she had just suffered, but, like Napoleon at Marengo, commencing a new battle.

"Of course I do!" yelled old Rumpel.

"To-day—Saturday?"

"And what if it is Saturday? Who will prevent me from sleeping to-day as well as on any other day, if I choose to?"

"Because I want to clean the windows to-day," returned the conscientious housekeeper.

"Then clean them when I am gone!"

"It will be too late then. The sun will shine upon the window panes," she replied.

"Then don't clean them at all, for what I care!" cried the major, stretching himself out upon the sofa again, with the intention of resuming his nap.

"But, Herr Major!" screeched the housekeeper, shaking her master by the shoulders.

"Potzt-tausend-schock-schwernoth!" exclaimed the major, beside himself with rage, bouncing off the sofa like an india-rubber ball. "This is going too far altogether! I ain't safe in my own house, even!"

"What!" screeched the corpulent girl, putting her arms akimbo. "Do you mean to say that I made an attempt upon your life, that I attempted to murder you?"

"No, you did not attempt to murder me, but it is not much less!" retorted Rumpel.

The obese Augusta became livid in the face. For a moment she was lost in thought, as if wishing to devise something that would surpass even her former mode of attacking him; but being unable at that instant to find the proper thing to do, she closed her eyes, began to thrash the air with her hands in the hope of clutching some support, and commenced to sway herself back and forth.

"Cease rocking yourself!" cried the major. "If you are going to fall, you can do so. I sha'n't prevent you. And if you fall you will have to get up alone, as you did before!"

The dreadful truths which old Rumpel uttered seemed to make a deep and convincing impression upon the mature damsel, for she suddenly ceased to sway herself. Her hands dropped by her side, her eyes still remaining closed. She saw that she could accomplish nothing to-day by fainting and convulsions, and that she must resort to more potent remedies.

After she had remained motionless for awhile, she slowly opened her eyes and, with a degree of dignity which no one supposed that she possessed, said:

"Herr Major! you have treated me to-day in a manner which an unprotected and faithful servant cannot put up with!"

"Do you intend to challenge me?" asked Rumpel, smiling ironically.

"Oh, no!" replied the fat girl, "I never entertain such murderous thoughts. The weaker sex must bear in silence!"

"Then you intend to sue me?" asked Rumpel, provokingly.

"No, I do not intend to sue you either," answered the housekeeper, with inimitable dignity; "I will only ask for my discharge!"

The old soldier seemed troubled. The colossal girl noticed the effect her words had produced, and she felt elated with inward joy.

"Spare your efforts to detain me or to excuse yourself," the offended maiden continued; "there are things that cannot be undone and which I can never forgive. You may therefore spare yourself useless talk. I mean what I say!"

Old Rumpel seemed to have become transformed into a marble pillar. His black eyes were riveted upon Augusta, and his breast rose and sank as if some violent internal commotion disturbed it.

The fat housekeeper saw all that, yet her countenance remained cold and calm; but in the deepest depths of her soul an ecstatic delight and chants of joy seemed to resound.

"I trust you will not refuse me my release, Herr Major," said the housekeeper, with a contemptuous curl of her plump upper lip.

The major was so dazed with delight that he had not yet regained his speech. Indeed, his bosom heaved even more violently than before, but suddenly he turned about and with rapid steps left the room.

"Ah!" uttered Augusta, her long pent-up breathing starting again with a whistling sound; "he is affected, and unable to speak from emotion. He left the room so that I might not see his tears, but he will come back presently and beg forgiveness. I have conquered him again. But that will not be sufficient. His obstinacy must be rooted out, never to return."

She, too, suddenly turned about, and with quick but slatternly steps left the room by another door.

When the major and his housekeeper simultaneously returned to the sitting-room a few minutes later, each had a sheet of paper in their hands on

which was some writing, and which they silently exchanged and silently read.

On the paper which the fat cook gave the major there was written as follows: "Wanted, a situation by a housekeeper who, for more than ten years, managed the household of a gentleman to his entire satisfaction, and who is a model of faithfulness, honesty, sobriety, economy, and amiability. Will only serve a lady hereafter. For further information inquire of Herrn Major Rumpel, No. 467 Blum's Court."

The followiug was written upon the paper which the major gave to his housekeeper:

"Augusta Hotliver, unmarried, born December 26, 18—, in Newerp, Pomerania; a member of the Lutheran church, who for the last ten years served me as housekeeper, is hereby discharged and is at liberty to accept another situation. R. Rumpel, Major and A. D. C."

The major's soul danced for joy while he read his paper, but he did not allow it to be seen.

Augusta's soul raved furiously from anger as she read her paper, but she, too, did not allow it to be seen.

Her face suddenly became livid, she made several ineffectual attempts to speak; thrust her clinched fists into the major's face, from which he precipitately recoiled, and hastily took up a position where he had the table between his housekeeper and himself. Here he carefully folded up the paper given to him by Augusta, put it in his breast-pocket, and with a sudden bound snatched up his hat and cane, and with another bound was out of the room.

The corpulent housekeeper, rushed like a cyclone, to the window, madly tore it open, and wildly called after her master:

"Herr major! Herr major! Where are you going?"

Old Rumpel, who was already on the sidewalk, turned around and seeing the glowing face of his amiable cook above him, answered, in a voice that sounded as if the battery which he once commanded had fired a victorious salvo:

"I am going to carry the notice to the employment bureau myself, so that you cannot back out!"

He then swung around again and trotted down the street so hastily that his long, black side-whiskers were blown backward.

Augusta swallowed her wrath, because she had no one now upon whom to vent it, and with the utmost calmness of mind began to polish the windows.

This dutifulness, even in moments of excitement and mental disturbance, is one of the most noble traits of the female character.

Major Rumpel, however, ran as if his head was on fire, and the further he ran the more quickly he went.

That is a characteristic sign of impatience, and is analogous to the falling stone which, proverbially, falls faster the nearer it reaches the earth.

The old fellow felt so happy in having gained his freedom once more that his overflowing joy overheated his machinery, causing the perspiration to run down his face in little rivulets, and his eyes to be filled with tears, rendering him almost blind.

Suddenly, on turning a corner of the street, something or somebody ran against him with so much force as to almost knock him over.

"Thunder and lightning!" he exclaimed, after recovering from the shock. "I have ran against a bill-post!"

"Excuse me, you only wan against me!" a sad voice replied, close to him.

The old soldier rubbed his eyes.

"Do you know me, sir?" said he gruffly, feeling his nose to ascertain whether it had become flattened in the collision.

"Yes, of couhse I do," replied the sad voice; "you ah Hevv Majov W-w-wumple!"

The old officer shrunk together. "What, is that you? The young man who poured beer or coffee over me? I always feared that some evil would happen to me through you; my apprehensions have come true!"

"Oh!" cried Rarrer, speaking very loud, knowing that the major was deaf. "Why should any evil happen to you thwough me? That would be the fihst time that I caused anothah misfohtune. On the contwaway. I always dwaw off hahm fwom othehs on to myself, like a magnet that attwacks iown."

Major Rumpel having satisfied himself that his nose was not flattened or crushed, felt somewhat composed, and said:

"May be so! And my apprehensions of evil may have been fulfilled by this little rencontre, so that I need fear you no longer."

"You have no weason to feah me, I assuah you, my deah Hevv Majov," answered Rarrer. "No one need be afwaid of me but I myself."

"Why have you that thick shawl wrapped about your head?" asked the major, for the first time noticing that the young man's head was swathed in a shawl.

"This is anothah example of a misfovtune that can only happen to me," cried Rarrer, sadly, but so loudly that the passers-by looked at the two in surprise. "Just think, my deah Hevv Majov, W—W—Wumpel; quite wecently, as I was paying a call at Madame von Fwohbehg to congwatulate heh on her biffday, a cehtain Pvivy Conselloh, Doctoh Stabevow,

asked me, without any weason whatevah, whethah I had the toothache. He 'painted the devil on the wall,' foh I had bahley wetuhned home when I was attacked by the most fwightful toothache. Aftah suffeving the most hovvible agony foh two weeks, I am now wesolved to have the aching tooth ex-twacted."

"Where does your dentist live?" asked the major.

"In W—W—Wenan Stweet," answered Rarrer.

"Oh, in Renan Street," repeated Rumpel; "then come, go along with me; I am going that way, too; I want to go to the employment bureau."

They started off, but on the way Rumpel consulted his watch, and the moment he perceived how late it was he made a wry face and stopped short. Rarrer also stopped, and perceiving that his companion was troubled, asked for the cause of it.

"My friends will expect me at the club in about ten minutes, and yet it is absolutely necessary for me to leave this notice at the employment bureau, and that will take me at least an hour. What is to be done?"

"If you will entwust the notice to me, I'll take it to the buweaw," said Rarrer, accommodatingly, "and you can go to youh club wight off."

The major thought a moment, and then took the paper out of his pocket and handed it to the young man.

"I'll avail myself of your kind offer," said he, "and the fear I had for you will thus be dissipated by your friendly act, and you will bring me luck instead of harm. If you will have the goodness to leave this at the bureau——"

"With the gweatest pleasah, my highly honohad Majov W—W—Wumpel!"

"Thanks, my dear Herr—what is your name?"

Rarrer elevated his eyebrows, corrugated his forehead, made a face like one who is about to sneeze, and then uttered something which the major took for "bow-wow."

"Adieu, my dear Herr Bow-wow. Hope to meet you again soon."

"Adieu, my deah Hevv Majov W—W—Wumpel. Hope to have the honah of meeting you again soon."

After shaking hands, they parted. The major trotted along happily to his club, and Rarrer to his dentist and the employment bureau. At this office the person in charge, after reading the major's document, said:

"This is quite apropos; I can recommend your housekeeper to a position forthwith."

"Thanks," said Rarrer, who was suffering so greatly that he did not care to stop and explain that it was not his housekeeper, but that of Major Rumpel, who wanted a situation, but hurried away to his dentist.

CHAPTER VII.

MEMENTO MORI.

After the stout Augusta had polished the windows, she went into the kitchen and made herself a cup of coffee.

This answers the same purpose for women as smoking a cigar does for men.

It affords them comfort both in weal and in woe; it excites and calms them at the same time.

It is a delirium of joy into which they transport themselves, "an intoxication without after-pains," and which produces a great desire for more.

When the ladies comfortably arrange themselves around the steaming coffee service, forming a "kaffee klatsch," they likewise transport themselves into a delirium of bliss. The hearts of the old ones become warm again, and those of the younger still warmer; and when they place the steaming little cup to their rosy lips, holding it with three taper fingers while the small one sticks out coquettishly, then they feel as if they were sipping nectar fresh from the fountain of Paradise.

The older dames smile to themselves and recall the time of their youth and love, and if their looks happen to rest upon the smooth rosy face of a young girl, they feel neither pain nor envy over the decadence of their own love and loveliness, and the undying vanity that always dominates the female breast whispers in their ears, "In your bloom you were even more beautiful than she is."

But the younger ones soon experience an indescribable blissfulness that expands their hearts.

Through the undulating vapor of the coffee, all things, men and circumstances, seem to be oscillating, and they themselves vacillate with the swaying world; they look about themselves for some support on which they could lean. But if the support is not safe and firm, or if they are unable to find any at all, they may for a time become disheartened, but they never renounce all hope.

Coffee is a nice, but in some respects a dangerous, drink, and when tobacco is added to it, love becomes too vast for the human breast.

This is apparent in the cases of the gentlemen pastors, who, as is well known, consume vast quantities of coffee and tobacco.

They preach nothing but love, practise nothing but love, and usually have the greatest number of children.

And these children, especially the daughters, inherit also a greater part of this intense love.

It is a good thing, indeed, that the women do not smoke like the gentlemen, for, with their weaker and more excitable nervous system, great evils would result therefrom.

After the stout Augusta, then, had cleaned the windows, she went into the kitchen and made herself a cup of coffee.

At the second cup she became calmer and felt more peaceful at heart.

She felt how necessary it was for her to be at peace with humanity, and her heart was permeated by a certain kind of blissfulness.

Everybody is entitled to enjoy a certain kind of blissfulness, and consequently the fat Augusta, too.

Through the undulating vapor of the coffee the circumstances seemed to her to become vacillating, and she oscillated with them, and she yearned for some stable condition, that is so beneficial to every

civilized being—and that's what the stout Augusta was, too.

She certainly would not have fallen, for at her age the blood no longer courses tumultuously in the arteries, and the devil assuefaction is at the same time an angel.

However, the fat Augusta had, for forty years and more, practised abstemiousness.

Practice is almost capable of altering the stamp of nature; it tames the devil, or expels him, with wonderful force.

The latter axioms are from Hamlet, and hence highly philosophical and true.

But we do not mean to say thereby that the corpulent Augusta formerly had the d—l in her, who, through assuefaction and practice, was expelled. Far be it from us. We only mean to assert that he was not there.

As we have already said, at the second cup of coffee the plump Augusta became calm and peaceful at heart.

She felt that she had carried it a little too far with her major, and on that account would be all the more kind to him when he returned home.

Truth to say, she had often intended to do it when seated at her after-dinner coffee; but when he returned, then she quarrelled with him right well.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Once more the corpulent housekeeper sat at her coffee, and pictured to herself such a lovely scene of the return of the major, and the kindly, not to say affectionate, reception she would give him, that her full, puffed-out face, became irradiated with celestial happiness.

That he would carry the notice which she had written in her anger to the employment bureau, she would not believe for an instant; the good, kind

major was certainly not capable of doing such a thing.

For, in reality she was very good to him, and had his best interests at heart; though, to be sure, she not infrequently made life unbearable to him, and tyrannized over him dreadfully.

She acted in accordance with the biblical injunction: Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth.

And since the whole of Christendom find in this precept sweet consolation, then Major Rumpel must do so, too.

The obese Augusta suddenly jumped off her chair, and her thoughts jumped higher yet.

"The bell rang!" said she, with bated breath, frightened. "Can it be that the major has returned so soon? In that case it must be remorse that brings him back to me! Ah, the good, noble, kind man! How good and attentive I'll be to him!"

After this monologue, she waddled as hastily as she could in her convenient morning shoes, through the rooms, her fat body shaking like a mass of jelly, and her heavy skirts flapping back and forth.

Arriving at the door, she pulled back the bolt, secured the door with the safety-chain, and asked, in a most amiable voice:

"Who is there?"

"Is it here where the housekeeper lives who seeks a situation?" asked a mellifluous female voice.

An icy chilliness ran through every member of the fat housekeeper.

"He has done it after all!" cried an injured voice within her. "I run to meet him, and intend to receive him in the most friendly manner; intend to be kind and indulgent to him; and now I find that the base betrayer has actually taken my notice to the employment bureau. I did not conquer him, after all, but I am the one that is con-

quered, it seems. This disgrace must be wiped out in some way, and a new battle will have to be fought."

"Or is it opposite?" asked the euphonious female voice again from without.

"Here, please," replied Augusta, forcing a socially-friendly expression into her large, flabby countenance; "you are at the right place, my honored lady. Will you have the kindness to come in?"

The lady entered.

Her hair was black, and her eyes were dark. The latter were endowed with a rare degree of liveliness and ability of observation. When she walked, everything about her shook and trembled, and in her hat were a pair of large, waving white feathers.

It was our old acquaintance—Madame Baldrian.

Her perpetually heated countenance displayed, as usual, hearty confidence, benevolence, and an overpowering amount of sweetness, with which she sugar-coated the pills which she desired her clients to swallow.

With a glance she took in the room and the surroundings she found herself in, and accurately measured the plump housekeeper.

"I have the honor to speak with Madame Majoress Rumpel?" asked Madame Baldrian, with her most winning smile, directing her steps toward the sofa that was indicated to her.

The fat girl blushed so intensely that for a moment she was totally incapable of answering.

"Oh, no," she stammered at last, when both had taken seats; "the Herr Major never married; I am only his housekeeper."

Madame Baldrian appeared to be surprised.

"Very strange!" said she. "When I first saw you I felt sure you were the Madame Majoress. You look so commanding, and at the same time so

humble, that one is tempted to address you as "my gracious lady."

"Ah, ah!" ejaculated the simple Augusta, casting down her eyes, and in embarrassment fumbling at her apron-strings. The spark thus thrown into her breast spread with lightning-like rapidity, and set her soul in a blaze.

"Just as I tell you," continued the marriage plotter, with well-assumed harmlessness, "I am a plain woman and say what I mean. My tongue speaks for my heart. H'm! Remarkable! You are really the housekeeper who advertised for a position to-day?"

"Yes, at your service," answered Augusta, who saw in this a prospect of carrying out her old plan and of conquering the major in the end, or of revenging herself upon him.

"One is ready to credit you with the good qualities which you claim in your announcement," went on the matrimonial agent, gazing confidentially at the housekeeper, "for they are written in your face—'honesty, frugality, economy, amiability, and obedience.' One must believe you when one looks at you."

The gullible Augusta, who was totally unused to such flattery, was at a loss what to say, while in the scheming head of the match-maker a project seemed to be growing more and more.

"Why are you leaving this place?" asked the promoter of marriages, further.

Now the stout Augusta became really embarrassed. Should she say anything bad against her good master? The good will she bore him would not permit her to do it. Should she relate the scene that took place to-day between them? That would cast a very strong doubt upon the amiability and tenderness which she boasted of, and which even the

strange lady had read in her face. Her vanity, also, which overtopped the good will in her heart, would not permit it.

What was Augusta to do? She did not know. She therefore kept her eyes cast down upon her lap and fumbled with her apron-strings.

Madame Baldrian followed the gaze of the housekeeper with a very peculiar expression on her countenance. She then looked up to her face and, with a prolonged tone in her voice which was as thin and piercing as an ethereal corkscrew, and such as the ladies assume when they ask certain questions, as if they desire to pull out an admission from the very soul, asked:

"Not on account of circumstances which——"

A question like this one, when propounded in the peculiar tone of voice alluded to, will, even when it strikes the most ingenuous ear, be sufficiently comprehensive to lead to a confession, if there is anything to confess.

Augusta therefore quickly raised her head, became fiery red in the face, looked at her visitor full and determinedly in the eye, and, with a degree of indignation and reprobation that unmistakably bore the stamp of sincerity, said:

"Madame, how can you think——"

"Good, very good," said Madame Baldrian, completely satisfied and convinced. "You spoke the truth, but everything is possible in this world!"

"I simply want to make a change," said the housekeeper, thinking this would be sufficient reason, which, diplomatically speaking, admitted a good deal and nothing at all at the same time.

The matrimonial agent seemed to be absorbed in making combinations, for she silently gazed upon the housekeeper for a long while, who again became greatly embarrassed.

She had never met such a strange lady in her whole life.

"How old are you?" asked that lady.

The corpulent girl looked up, frightened.

"Very well!" added Madame Baldrian; "you needn't tell me; I know. At any rate, you are too old to go into service again."

"What?" asked the housekeeper, painfully affected. "You think I am too old, and consequently will not engage me?"

"Don't misunderstand me, my friend," said the match-maker, suavely. "I will not engage you, not because you are too old, but because you are destined for something better than housekeeping."

Augusta looked at her with big eyes.

"And for what better purpose am I destined?" she asked, inquisitively.

"For matrimony," said the matrimonial agent, "and for all that that implies!"

Augusta uttered a cry and jumped off the sofa as if she had been shot.

"Sit down, child, sit down!" said the match-maker, kindly motioning with her hand.

The bashful girl sat down, but she seated herself as if the sofa were full of raw eggs.

"Believe me, my child, I am actuated by the best of motives," continued Madame Baldrian, "otherwise I would take you into my service, for I need a housekeeper very much. But the interest I take in my fellow-beings is always paramount to my own, and, therefore, I am now disposed to care for your happiness rather than for my convenience."

The fat girl gazed upon her visitor with peculiar but confidential looks.

"Yes, child, I mean to procure you a husband," added the match-maker.

"You are not making fun at me, my lady, are

you?" asked the housekeeper, with mixed feelings of fear and doubt.

"I do not jest upon such subjects," said Madame Baldrian, with inimitable dignity. "No one in Berlin ever knew me to do that!"

She then took a visiting card out of her portemonnaie and handed it to Augusta.

But the latter was in such a state of excitement that she glanced at the name without reading it, and then put it on the table.

"Who is the man you want to procure for me as a husband?" she asked, with maidenly modesty, casting her eyes bashfully into her lap again.

"Well, who but your own major?" answered the matrimonial agent, impressively.

Augusta uttered another cry, and once more jumped off the sofa.

"Sit still, child, sit still!" said Madame Baldrian, partly impatiently and partly commanding, motioning with her hand. "Why do you get so frightened every time I mention that which we are destined for? There is no need of your being so shy with me!"

Augusta seated herself again.

"Oh, heavens," she sighed—an exclamation women often utter, because it expresses and covers everything possible.

"Do you dislike the gentleman?" asked the matrimonial agent, insinuatingly.

"Oh no, not in the least!" quickly answered the bashful Augusta, with a good deal of animation. "But I never would have dreamed that the major—besides—the major is so old already—he is over seventy."

Madame Baldrian again gazed at her new client with a peculiarly penetrating look.

"That does not matter!" said she; "you need

not worry about it in the least. The old soldiers live long."

"You think so?" asked the mature maiden, with a friendly look at her visitor. And then she added: "The major served in the mounted artillery."

"All the better!" promptly responded Madame Baldrian with the utmost assurance. "The artillery soldiers are among men what sausages and cured hams are among meat produce. They have passed the greatest part of their lives in smoke, and that acts as a preservative—which, as an old housekeeper, you know, is the case."

Augusta sighed as if a load were removed from her tender breast. Is it possible that the pure creature thought of something? We believe not.

As we have already said, the blood in her veins no longer coursed tumultuously—perhaps it never did—and she had long ago given up all thoughts of love and domestic happiness, with all that that implies.

But who could blame her if she was desirous of having all the good things of life complete when they were all at once placed within her grasp?

The desire to have everything complete is, in fact, one of the cardinal virtues of the wife, and springs from her great love of order.

Hence, this is why the shy Augusta sighed from a relieved bosom. The hope of being able to gratify her great love of order and completeness afforded her great prospective pleasure.

"Do you know the major, my dear madame?" asked the housekeeper after a brief silence.

"No, I never saw him," answered the lady.

"Then how do you know——?" asked Augusta further.

"What?"

"That——"

"Oh! I understand what you mean. Whether I'll succeed in making a pair of you two? Was not that what you wished to say?"

The fat cook nodded with her head.

"Nothing simpler and easier than that," replied Madame Baldrian, with the utmost assurance. "The affair is as good as settled, and for two reasons."

Augusta looked at the match-maker inquiringly.

"The first and chief of these two reasons," went on the hymeneal schemer, "is that you love the major."

The housekeeper was startled as if by an electric battery, and made such a remarkably surprised face that anybody but the match-maker would have laughed outright.

"And the second reason is," added the latter, with the utmost seriousness, "that the major reciprocates your love."

"Heavenly Father!" exclaimed the divinity that presided over Major Rumpel's culinary department, clasping her hands and beginning to rock herself, as if she experienced something entirely different from love.

The match-maker eyed her victim with a triumphant look, and went on didactically, like a professor delivering a lecture:

"I will make it all perfectly clear to you, my child; listen attentively! Two persons of opposite sexes—oh, stop blushing continually!—who have lived so intimately together for ten years as you and the major, at last acquire the germ of feelings in their hearts which may, it is true, slumber for a while, yet requires only an enlivening breath to be awakened, and bloom forth with wonderful rapidity into buds, blossoms, and fruit. Now, albeit the germ may slumber, still it will manifest its presence by certain symptoms, which the parties con-

cerned are at first totally unable to explain, till a stranger appears, and with one word pulls the veil from off their eyes. Did you understand what I said, child?"

The fat Augusta did not answer; her hands were still clasped, and she still continued to rock herself to and fro—which might have indicated any other sensation than love.

"I'll make it still plainer to you," went on the promoter of marriages. "Didn't you occasionally get angry at the major, without being able to explain to yourself the reason why?"

"Yes," said Augusta, quickly; "that's true!" and then she added, still more quickly: "Although I am tenderness and kindness personified."

"That is love," said the match-maker, with the infallibility of a professor of mathematics who has just proved an example.

The fat Augusta rocked herself rapidly as if she was not able to stand it any longer.

"Did you not occasionally entertain for him a strange, inexplicable resentment?" asked the matrimonial agent, further. "Did you not sometimes feel an inward satisfaction at provoking, angering, and vexing him?"

"Yes," answered the housekeeper, "although I am amiability and gentleness personified."

"That's love!" said the lady. "That is a kind of rancor which one is unable to explain, because the germ I spoke of is not yet awake; that is a kind of ill-humor that one constantly feels who wants to be understood and is not, and who wants to understand and cannot."

It now began to dawn in Augusta's eyes.

"And he," continued Madame Baldrian, "the major—did it not seem strange to you that he strove to get away from you, to avoid you, seeking to be alone?"

Augusta nodded and rocked herself still more rapidly.

"That's love," said the matrimonial agent; "the coy, unknown love. Did you ever read our great Schiller, child?"

The housekeeper shook her head.

"How beautiful and true he expresses himself upon these things!" said the match-maker. "Listen once:

> From the maiden
> The youth tears himself away,
> And wildly rushes into life.

Well, what do you say to this, child?"

The fat girl rocked herself furiously.

"And did you not sometimes catch him throwing an angry and stealthy look at you," went on the matrimonial agent, "as if he wanted to say something to you, but quickly checked himself?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the housekeeper.

"That's his displeasure at not being able to understand his love!" said the lady.

"Oh! oh!" uttered Augusta.

"And did you not sometimes have a quarrel?" questioned the match-maker, further. "Did he not try to break the bond that confined him forcibly, in order to free himself from a feeling that mastered him? Did he not occasionally become perfectly wild and uncontrollable, and strive to tear himself away from the influence which you exerted over him?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the mature damsel, so excitedly that she was scarcely able to retain her seat.

"That's already more than love, and if he is not quickly made to comprehend the state of his own feelings he will become mad," said the match-maker. "He is no longer able to restrain the wild, vehement

feelings that rage in his breast; his condition is critical, and if he does not heed it and is not conciliated, he may kill himself or you."

"Heavenly Father, forgive me my sins!" blubbered the fat girl, wringing her hands and repeatedly ogling the ceiling with her watery optics.

"You may thank your Creator that destiny brought me to you," said Madame Baldrian. "It may yet be time to prevent a calamity, and convert the matter into one of happiness. I trust he has not already sought a watery grave!"

Augusta cried out aloud, and in her anxiety was about to jump out of the window to look for some sign of his coming.

"Keep your seat, child, keep your seat!" said Madame Baldrian, in a mollifying tone, pulling her back to the sofa by the skirts. "Where do you want to go to? I was only joking. Men do not drown themselves so quickly as that."

Augusta seated herself again.

"I only wanted to prove to you that I was right," continued the match-maker, smilingly.

The housekeeper looked at her visitor inquiringly.

"When I said before that you love him," added Madame Baldrian.

The major's faithful cook sighed and laid both hands upon her stomach.

"Isn't it true?" asked the matrimonial agent. "Don't you care for him just a little bit already?"

"Oh, very much!" cried the big girl, with so much vehemence that the face of her patroness assumed a surprised expression.

"Heaven help you both!" said the latter, leaning back on the sofa. "It was high time with you two. What an ardent pair of lovers you are!"

Augusta cast down her eyes.

"What pleasures you two will enjoy!" continued

the scheming dame, greatly enjoying the tortures she inflicted upon her victim.

"Don't you postpone the wedding too long; do you hear, child?"

"Oh heavens!" said the fat Augusta, bashfully twisting her shoulders like a school-girl.

"Have you read Goethe?" asked Madame Baldrian, who was full of deviltry to-day.

The blushing damsel shook her head negatively.

"How nice and how true the immortal bard expresses himself upon these things. Listen a bit:

> 'Tis one's greatest blessing
> To receive from such a loving creature fond caressing.

She spoke this couplet with such a gushing seductiveness, accompanied by such an alluring leer, that the fat Augusta became strangely affected. Her heart was so full and her bodice so loose, that she laughed, wept, and shouted at the same time.

So great a power has love over mankind and womankind, albeit it may only be imaginary love.

"Well," said the match-maker, tickling Augusta under the ribs with a finger, "will I get an invitation to the wedding?"

The damsel nodded.

"And to the first christening, too?" whispered the matrimonial agent.

The corpulent Augusta became fiery red in the face.

"Oh, go away!" said she, pouting, coyly casting down her eyes and playfully striking the lady's hand.

As this mischievous person was about to whisper another terrible question into her ear, Augusta friskily skipped away to escape additional embarrassment, but soon returned bearing a coffee service, which she placed before the one who had brought her so much good fortune.

"May I have the pleasure of offering you a cup of coffee, my dear madame?" asked the housekeeper, with a most blissfully happy face.

A woman will decline an invitation to partake of a cup of coffee in exceptional cases only. The matrimonial agent therefore nodded affirmatively, and arranged herself conveniently upon the sofa.

"Yes, thanks!" said she; "we can chat a little more meantime. How soon will he be back? If it does not take very long I'll wait, and settle the matter completely."

"He will be back in less than half an hour," answered the housekeeper, emphasizing the word "he" in a most affectionate manner already.

"That will suit me very well," remarked Madame Baldrian, in dulcet tones, sipping the hot coffee, "and I'll prove to you that I was not mistaken in his case, either."

"Heavens, if it should prove true!" sighed the maiden, stirring her cup and ogling the ceiling.

"Everything I prophesy comes true!" declaimed the match-maker, with pompous pathos; "for in matters of this kind I have an experience second to none. Listen, and I will tell you beforehand the symptoms he will display. On entering he will be somewhat shy and uncertain; afterward he will affect a certain degree of friendliness that will be restrained by his embarrassment. When he ascertains that I came to engage you he will be torn by inward torture, though outwardly he will appear to rejoice; and when at last I inform him that you love him, he will be completely overwhelmed by the powerful sensation, whose name and importance he will only just then learn, and, almost completely prostrated, he will sink into a chair. If he does that, then you are perfectly sure of him, my child;

then you are beloved as no woman was ever loved before, and eternal bliss will be your lot!"

The corpulent spinster closed her eyes, and rocked herself in blissful anticipation of that joyous hour.

"But soon afterward," went on Madame Baldrian, "his haughty military nature will rise in revolt against the chains that are about to be put upon him, though they are the rosy chains of love; his rough soul will feel offended because I betrayed his feelings before he acknowledged them himself; and he will, therefore, try to deny them; will contradict everything; will curse and swear, just as the powerful sons of Mars are apt to do. In the end, however, our melting woman's tears will soften him, and he will press you to his heart, and press the first chaste kiss upon your pure brow."

The fat Augusta involuntarily wiped her forehead with the apron, and moistened her thick, red lips with her tongue, as if in anticipation of future happiness.

Just then the bell rang softly at the outer door. The housekeeper started.

"Is that he?" asked Madame Baldrian, her face glistening from excitement, spreading herself a little more upon the sofa.

"I think so," gasped Augusta, in a whisper. "Though he generally rings much louder."

"Didn't I tell you so?" whispered the arch marriage plotter. "He fears the reception he will get. Quick, now, open the door!"

"I dare not!" groaned Augusta, laying a hand upon her stomach.

"No delay now!" urged Madame Baldrian. "Open the door forthwith, and let the loved one in."

The mature maiden tardily got up, anxiously looked at her patroness once more, who gave her a commanding and encouraging look, after which she slowly shuffled to the door and opened it.

Major Rumpel, it is true, entered somewhat hesitatingly, for the scene that was brought about today by his reading of the new description of the battle of Waterloo—which description imbued him with so much courage and resolution—was the only one of its kind in the ten years that Augusta supervised his household and ministered to his wants—and the apprehension of its effects gave him some concern and caused him some fear.

But when he saw her standing before him shyly and bashfully, with downcast eyes, and, in addition, observed the presence of a strange lady in the room, he stopped at the door and looked in surprise first at one and then at the other.

"This lady wishes to engage me," cried Augusta; and Madame Baldrian, without rising, made him a graceful bow.

In the eyes of the major a secret joy flashed up for a moment.

"Thunder!" said he, mentally, "that feeble-minded young man, who don't know his own name, has complied with my request in a wonderfully quick manner. My apprehension that he would bring me bad luck was groundless, after all."

Madame Baldrian, who had noticed the flash of joy in the major's eyes, threw a glance full of meaning at her *protégée*.

"You don't mind if I tarry awhile here, Herr Major?" said that lady, with the utmost amiability addressing herself to the old soldier.

The major looked at her pleasantly, advanced, and placed his hand to his best ear.

"He is somewhat hard of hearing," said Augusta to Madame Baldrian. "You must talk right loud to him."

"You will permit me to tarry awhile?" repeated the match-maker, loudly.

"You are in a hurry?" answered Rumpel. "I am very sorry."

Madame Baldrian took a deep breath and then hallooed with all her might.

"You don't mind if I stay a little while?"

"Not in the least," replied the major. "Don't hurry yourself on my account, I beg of you."

At a secret sign from the matrimonial agent, Augusta placed a chair at the table and took from Rumpel his hat and cane.

"Will you join us, Herr Major?" cried Madame Baldrian.

The major bowed in acknowledgment and sat down; and Augusta, at another secret wink from her patroness, brought a cup and saucer, which the latter filled with coffee with her own hands.

"Do you take cream!" she asked.

"You wish to know my name? Rumpel, at your service," replied the major, bowing affably.

Madame Baldrian was seized with a slight attack of nervousness.

"Will you drink your coffee with or without cream?" she repeated.

"Ah, thanks!" replied the major, slightly embarrassed. "I don't wish any coffee at all. I had some at the club."

"Oh, well, you might drink a cup for company's sake," said Madame Baldrian, pouring cream and putting sugar in the cup. "You must be gallant to the ladies, Herr Major."

Rumpel took a mouthful and made a wry face.

"Isn't it good?" cried the match-maker, bending over the table.

"It's horribly sweet!" answered the major. "I don't like so much cream nor so much sugar in my coffee."

"Oh, well, this is a day of sweetness," cried Ma-

dame Baldrian, with a Bacchanalian tone of voice. "You will taste more sweets to-day, my dear major."

Rumpel, who did not understand what she said at all, looked grateful.

The bashful Augusta turned red and did not know in which direction to look.

"I came in response to the announcement which your housekeeper sent to the employment bureau," said Madame Baldrian resuming the conversation.

The major bowed.

"She seems to have excellent qualities," continued the lady.

"Yes, excellent," assented the major.

"You were always pleased with her, and can sincerely recommend her?" asked she, further.

"Yes, I was always pleased with her and can sincerely recommend her," affirmed the major.

"I am glad to hear it!" said the matrimonial agent.

Old Rumpel's face assumed an expression of intense delight.

"She will take her away," said he, mentally. "Thank heavens, I'll get rid of her!"

The matrimonial agent threw an encouraging look at Augusta, whose heart could almost be heard beating.

"And why do you want to send her away?" asked the former, further.

The major became somewhat embarrassed, and was at a loss what answer to give.

"Because she wishes to make a change," he answered finally, in a low voice.

Madame Baldrian gazed at him with a penetrating look.

"But why does she wish to make a change?" she went on, examining him. "Since she pleased

you well hitherto, there must have recently occurred something that renders it necessary for her to make a change—something very unsatisfactory to her and difficult for her to overlook."

Old Rumpel looked sheepish and cast a stealthy glance at Augusta, whose heart went on beating louder and louder.

"And this is actually the case," spoke Madame Baldrian, further. "My never-failing, keen observation has given me a clear insight into the situation. I know everything!"

The major looked at Augusta again, but she had her eyes cast down upon her lap.

"This young woman has sacrificed ten of her best years for you and served you, not as a servant, but as a friend," continued Madame Baldrian. "This girl has carried you, dandled you upon her hands!"

The major sighed, and the matrimonial agent lightly kicked Augusta's foot.

"And how did you recompense this angelic girl, Herr Major," spoke Madame Baldrian, further, "for sacrificing ten of her blooming years in your service?"

The major shrugged his shoulders, because he did not know what answer to make.

"Do you think that such a thing can be paid for with filthy lucre?" went on the match-maker. "Do you imagine that Augusta served you for money? Oh no, Herr Major; she was actuated by nobler motives in the sweet performance of her duties than by avarice! But instead of giving her your heartfelt thanks, you treat her unkindly. You are unthankful for her noble acts, return harshness for her tenderness, and garrulousness for her amiability, till the silent, patient, and submissive girl is unable to bear it any longer; for even the worm squirms for being too often trod upon, and so, too, Augusta

is finally brought to a state of morbid irritation, and suffers from nervous excitement—which is only a reflex of your own condition."

Old Rumpel was at a loss what to make of the affair, and his face assumed a puzzled expression.

"I have come to your relief, Herr Major," continued the match-maker, with impassioned tones. "I have cast my sharp, penetrating, unerring glance into your soul; I have talked for an hour with this young girl, and therefore I am now able to tell you the reason why you so often plagued her."

"Well, why?" asked the major, curious to a degree, shading each ear with a hand for the purpose of improving his hearing.

"Because Augusta loves you!" cried Madame Baldrian, in a ringing voice.

Old Rumpel opened his eyes to their utmost capacity, and looked in a dazed manner.

"Because she loves you to distraction!" affirmed the matrimonial agent, impressively.

The major now let go his ears, his arms dropped impotently by his side, he shut his eyes, and he fell back in his chair, utterly crushed.

Madame Baldrian threw a look of triumph at her young *protégée*, pointing toward Rumpel with her right hand, as if to say, "There, didn't I tell you so?"

Owing to her constantly growing excitement, the fat Augusta had attained to a condition bordering on mental derangement; but when she saw the prophecy of Madame Baldrian fulfilled, and the major, overcome by his feelings, sinking down, totally collapsed, she was scarcely able to contain herself any longer. A wave of consuming fire streamed through her entire body. She leaped from the sofa, with one bound reached the major's chair, and in a loud, heartrending voice, cried:

"Roderick, my beloved Roderick!" and sank down at his feet with a crash, dropping her big head into his lap like a cannon-ball.

"God have mercy upon me!" cried old Rumpel, feeling that part of his anatomy that was hurt with both hands, but they only encountered Augusta's head.

Madame Baldrian now got up.

Silently and impressively, her face radiant with pleasure, she now stepped behind Rumpel's chair, put her hands upon his shoulders, brought her lips close to his best ear, and shouted with all her strength:

"I congratulate you heartily! I knew very well that you reciprocated Augusta's love!"

The major started as if he had been shot from behind.

He tore his eyes wide open, but when he saw one woman at his shoulder and another upon his lap, he gazed in dismay, first at one and then at the other. As soon as he had collected his thoughts he began to beat with his hands and kick with his feet, to free himself from the demons that clung to him.

He soon freed himself from Madame Baldrian, who got a severe blow square upon her nose, but the head of Augusta seemed to become constantly heavier, weighing him down like a heavy load, till, with a forcible jerk, he pushed himself and chair backward and the girl came down plump upon the floor, striking the bare boards with her forehead.

The major jumped up and began to run about the room like a raving Roland.

"Either you have become crazy, or I have," he growled. "This is a *Himmel-schock-schwerenoths-withschaft!*"

"No, my dear major, you are not crazy," said

Madame Baldrian, following him so that he should hear what she said, "but in love, so madly in love as to scarcely believe it, still less to admit it!"

Old Rumpel turned around and stared at the matrimonial agent.

But on beholding a perfectly calm face, displaying an expression of sincere conviction, he clasped both hands to his head, turned around abruptly, and was about to resume his race of despair about the room.

But as one fairy was still lying at his feet, and feeling the hot breath of the other at his back, he was at a loss, in his rage, what to do. He therefore leaped over the tender virgin, but in doing so he sprained a knee, and he found that it caused him much pain when he attempted to resume his race about the room.

"Now, has not everything happened as I predicted?" whispered Madame Baldrian to Augusta. "Get up now and help me to make a final attack upon his heart."

The housekeeper laboriously got up from the floor, her patroness again stepped behind the major, who had seated himself and was rubbing his injured knee.

"Dear Major Rumpel!" said she.

The major turned around, frightened.

"I swear to you that Augusta loves you!" went on Madame Baldrian, impressively, "and I see it clearly in your eyes that you reciprocate her love!"

"First time I ever heard of it!" growled the major, with a marked expression of disgust on his face.

"I am not surprised that your rough nature will not submit at once," spoke the match-maker, further, in a sweet, seductive voice; "but it will not be long before the icy crust will melt from your

glowing heart; you will fall upon the throbbing breast of the object you longed for so long, and your bashful kisses will form the happy answer which your inward emotion prevents you from uttering."

"Be still!" yelled the major, almost distracted. "What are you talking about? Engage this housekeeper, and take her with you at once, if possible."

"Oh, no; I do not intend to engage her, nor take her with me," replied Madame Baldrian.

"And why not?" cried Rumpel, furiously running his hands through his hair.

"Because you are going to marry her, you old rogue, you!" returned the matrimonial schemer, coquettishly threatening him with a finger.

"I will then be either stark mad, or near my end!" said the major.

At these words the fat Augusta broke out in low sobs.

"See!" said Madame Baldrian, "the poor tender creature cries when you allude to the end of your life!"

The major looked at Augusta with a puzzled face. He had never seen her cry.

He turned to Madame Baldrian with the intention of addressing her, but found that she held a handkerchief pressed to her eyes and was weeping, too.

"You have broken her heart!" she ejaculated, between the bogus sobs.

Augusta now began to cry so vehemently as to cause some alarm.

"If you do not bestow upon her your name her reputation will be destroyed forever!" uttered the matrimonial agent, further, between the sobs.

"How so?" shrieked the major. "I never had anything to do with her reputation."

Madame Baldrian coolly took out Augusta's advertisement from her satchel, and read it.

"Wanted a situation by a housekeeper, who for more than ten years managed the household of a gentleman to his entire satisfaction, and who is a model of faithfulness, honesty, sobriety, economy, and amiability. *Will only serve a lady hereafter.*"

"Well, that is her advertisement," said the major. "What is there in it?"

"Will only serve a lady hereafter," repeated Madame Baldrian, with marked emphasis.

The major looked at her as if he still failed to understand her.

"These words will be published in to-morrow's newspaper," continued Madame Baldrian; "for it will not be known at the bureau whether I have engaged her or not. These words will be read by thousands and tens of thousands, and the construction that will be put upon them will be such as to destroy her reputation forever!"

The major rubbed his forehead in the hope of stimulating his understanding a little.

"Don't you understand it yet?" asked the hymeneal plotter. "'Will only serve a lady hereafter!' that is to say, will not have anything more to do with a gentleman."

"Yes, I understand that," said Rumpel.

"Well, why not a gentleman, do you think?" went on the match-maker. "Because her experience with the latter was disagreeable, so disagreeable that her tender, shy, and timid soul was shocked."

"Oh!" growled the major.

"Because things were suggested to her that caused her virtue to blush with shame," added Madame Baldrian, with sharp emphasis.

"What?" cried the major. "How dare you insinuate such a thing?"

"The thoughtless girl wrote the words as they arose in her mind, without knowing or thinking that

they would destroy her reputation forever—which will certainly happen if you decline to save the innocent girl's honor by giving her your name!"

Augusta cried now spasmodically, and with outstretched arms advanced toward the major.

The latter made a gesture of disgust and turned away, but behind him stood the arch plotter, sobbing too, with tearful eyes and supplicatingly clasped hands.

Old Rumpel looked as if he would like to leap out of his skin, and he suddenly turned about in the hope of escaping from the two earthly angels.

But it was no use. They dogged his footsteps, and the weeping, the wailing, and the sobbing constantly became more and more vehement; and wherever he went he had a modern Niobe before and behind him; and every time he attempted to gain the door of exit he was in danger of falling into the outstretched arms of his housekeeper, or colliding with the match-maker.

"Herr Major, you have resisted us long enough now," said Madame Baldrian, behind him. "You may surrender with honor."

"Roderick, my beloved Roderick!" sobbed the fat Augusta, alternately, first in one ear and then in the other.

The major, however, ran in a zigzag manner about his apartment like one bereft of reason, like a deer chased by the hounds, speedily to be captured; or like the king in chess, about to be checkmated.

The perspiration stood in drops upon his forehead, his black-dyed mustache that usually stood out so truculently, hung down wet and limp at both sides of his painfully distorted mouth, and his long side-whiskers were blown back like a dark veil.

His strength at last seemed to give out com-

pletely, for he staggered toward a chair at the window, fell into it, leaned his head back, and stretched out his lean legs as if he were near his end.

"Will you marry that girl, Herr Major?" sobbed Madame Baldrian.

"Roderick, my dear Roderick!" cried the stout Augusta, into his best ear.

"I'll remain here, if necessary, the whole night, and will not cease till you consent to marry her," shrieked Madame Baldrian into his other ear.

"Roderick, my dear Roderick, give me a kiss!" cried the fat girl.

"Yield, you rough soldier, you!" exclaimed the match-maker, fondling his cheek with both hands.

"Give me a kiss, do, dear Roderick!" supplicated Augusta, bringing her lips close to his.

"Come now, say you will, like a good old fellow!" coaxed the matrimonial agent, on one side.

"Will you marry me, my beloved Roderick?" begged Augusta, on the other side.

The major had become as pale as a corpse, and looked utterly demoralized and exhausted; his countenance twitched, and a ghastly expression of despair played around his mouth.

Suddenly he opened his eyes wide and bounced out of the chair, pushed both earthly angels aside by violent strokes of his arms, like one swimming, and like a hunted deer rushed toward the door.

"Yes, yes," he shrieked in cutting tones, that echoed the harrowing pains of his soul. "I'll do all you ask of me, only let me out!"

He was just in the act of turning the knob when the door was opened from without, and Rarrer, with his head thickly muffled in a shawl, entered.

"What is it you want here?" cried the major to the new-comer, still trembling from excitement. "I thought you went to your dentist!"

"Yes, I was theah," stammered Rarrer, woefully distorting his face; "but unfohtunately he pulled out a wong tooth, and now my pains ah gweatah than evah!"

"Did you come here to tell me that?" furiously cried the major.

"No," replied Rarrer, painfully, "I only wished to infom you that I delivehed the notice at the buweau, and that most pwobably a lady would call to-day to engage youah housekeepah!"

"She is here already!" yelled the major, fiercely. "I was not mistaken in you after all; my apprehensions were correct. You brought me bad luck!"

"I am extweemly sowy foh it!" said Rarrer. "Will you pehmit me to sit down foah a minute, I have such tevvible pains!"

He dropped into a chair and sat groaning and rocking himself to and fro.

"I will go now," said Madame Baldrian, preparing to leave. "My task is completed here. Your promise, Herr Major, is alike satisfactory to me and honorable to yourself; I trust you, for the word of a soldier is more reliable than the oath of a civilian. Adieu, dear child!" she added, turning to the cook, Augusta. "I brought you happiness, as I do wherever I go."

She was in the act of leaving the room when her looks fell upon poor Rarrer, who seemed to be suffering terribly.

"Unfortunate young map!" said she, taking a small vial of chloroform and wadding out of her reticule; "you shall have help, too. It is always well to have such remedies handy. There, drop a drop on the wadding, and then put it into your ear," she added, handing him the cotton and the little vial.

Like a drowning man who beholds his last chance of saving himself, Rarrer grasped at the offered remedy, but in his haste he completely drenched the cotton, put it into his ear, and commenced to inhale from the bottle besides.

"Adieu, my dear major!" said Madame Baldrian, turning to the panting old man. "I can read the gratitude you feel in your eyes, and more than that I cannot ask. I wish you joy. The happiest days of your life are before you!"

"Adieu!" replied the major, ironically. "Oh, yes, I am very grateful to you!"

Madame Baldrian bowed to him in the most gracious manner, and with the majesty of a queen strutted out of the room.

"I sha'n't do it!" exclaimed the major, slamming the door, which the lady had left open, and stamping with his foot to give greater emphasis to his expression. "I'd be crazy indeed if I allowed myself to be led about by such a termagant. Who is this Beelzebub of a woman, any way?"

"I don't know," replied Augusta, sobbing; "she gave me her card, but I didn't read the name on it. There it is upon the table."

The major walked to the table, picked up the card, and read it. Suddenly his face blanched, his eyes became lustreless and staring, his hands dropped impotently to his sides, his legs trembled, and from between his bloodless and quivering lips, in sepulchral tones, he uttered the words:

"Madame Baldrian!!!—one of the most dangerous characters living. She has already poisoned more than one person!"

The fat Augusta blubbered louder than ever.

Wild chaos seemed to reign in old Rumpel's head.

Presently his gaze fell upon Rarrer, who was re-

clining in a collapsed condition in the chair. His eyes were shut, his head resting upon one shoulder, and in one hand he still held the little open bottle.

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the major; "she has poisoned this young man, too. The young man who don't know his own name, and can't pronounce the letter R. There he lies, dead as a rat! Horrible! horrible!"

The major trembled from head to foot; his knees shook so violently that he was barely able to stand.

"She put sugar in my coffee," he murmured to himself, in a hoarse whisper; "but it was undoubtedly arsenic, for it had a very peculiar taste. Death will soon claim me for its own—perhaps in less than an hour. It is time to think of the salvation of my soul!"

Augusta sobbed as if her heart would break. The major directed upon her a sad and lingering look.

"My thoughts are becoming confused," said he, in a low voice, "the poison is already beginning its work. I may have sinned against you, though I am not conscious how. But when one is near his end, one must make atonement and make amends, even for doubtful wrongs. Come, Augusta, let us go to the nearest minister, and get him to perform a distress-marriage for us that will re-establish your reputation. Come, quick, ere it is too late!"

Augusta hobbled along, weeping convulsively, half-blinded by her tears; she put on her hat awry, the major seized an old military cap instead of his high silk hat, and then took another look around the room, as if mentally taking leave of it forever.

"The body of the young man must remain here for the present," said he, "but we can tell the minister the entire circumstances, and he can

notify the authorities. I will never enter these rooms again alive. Let us go, Augusta, my feet are beginning to grow cold already."

He then threw a sheet over Rarrer's head, clutched the thick arm of his housekeeper, left the room with her, shut the door, and got out into the street to call a droschki.

The noise caused by the slamming to of the door aroused Rarrer from his stupor. He tore the sheet from his head and looked about in astonishment.

"What has become of them all?" he asked himself, after collecting his thoughts, his looks wandering about the room. "My toothache is gone, thanks to the wemedy Madame Baldwian gave me. I must save it in case I have anotheh attack. But what was she doing heah, that hovvible maviage manufactuwess, who has alweady caused so much misevy to mankind! Wheahevah heah foot tweads no gwass of happiness gwows! But wheah ah they all gone to?"

He got up and looked into the adjoining rooms —not a living soul was to be seen.

"It is wemahkable!" said he to himself. "I must go home."

He took his hat and attempted to open the door, but found it was locked. The careful housekeeper did not forget to take the precaution of making everything secure before leaving the house.

"This is a pwetty how do you do!" said the young man. "These people have locked me in and gone away, pevhaps on an excuvsion, and ah likely to be gone the whole day. I am tevvibly hungwy. I haven't eaten a mohsel of food these thwee days. This is vevy unfovtunate."

He ran to the window, and was just in time to see the major and his housekeeper driving away.

"Hevv Majov! Hevv Majov!" cried Rarrer. "Hevv Majov W–W–Wumpel! You have locked me in! Hey, Hevv Majov W–W–Wumpel!"

But neither the major nor his youthful bride heard him, and when he saw the droschki disappear around the corner he sank down upon a chair with dull resignation, and fell to thinking how long one can live without taking any food.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN DRESSING-GOWN AND SLIPPERS.

Privy Counsellor Dr. Staberow, sat in a large elegantly upholstered chair, looking perfectly contented and happy.

He looked somewhat paler than before, and his clothes seemed to have become slightly too large, but that did not prevent him, as we have said, from looking perfectly contented and happy. Just then he was engaged in twirling his thumbs, which, as everybody knows, only people who are in a very happy frame of mind are apt to do.

Privy Counsellor Staberow was still in the midst of his honeymoon, and seemed to be completely intoxicated with its pleasures, albeit he was a physician.

But why should not a physician have his joyous intoxications too? Is he not a human being?

The honeymoon is so delightful that everyone, even a physician, must become intoxicated with its delights, for it supplies us with the most complete deception of the realities of life, its poetry almost completely hides the prosaic part.

The deception of the realities of life reaches such a point during the honeymoon that mankind imagine themselves to be angels, although during that period, in particular, they are often reminded that they are not angels.

Dr. Staberow must have been conscious of possessing something of an angelic nature, for he looked so serene and happy that his face resembled the fat angels that flutter upon pictures, or blow the trombone on the stained windows in the churches.

"Ah!" he commenced to talk in a low voice to himself—which, in fact, only persons in a happy state of mind usually do—"that was a happy thought of mine to get married. How quietly I can remain at home and enjoy its delights. I can now realize what I longed for all my life. I don't need to drive about the whole day now, look at foul tongues, and feel dyspeptic persons' pulses. All the work I do now occupies me three or four hours. She is a capital woman, that Madame Baldrian! I never would have got so far without her. I cannot imagine at all why my mother-in-law gave me her daughter for a wife. Such a rich and beautiful and accomplished young lady as my wife is, to marry one like me—a doctor at that, and one not young any more either! I can't account for it at all! But now that it is done there is no need to speculate as to the cause. Everything, however, seems possible! At any rate, I am now in a position to enjoy a quiet, comfortable, and happy life. Things will be better yet by and by," he went on, his face assuming an inexpressibly happy appearance, "now that my mother-in-law is come to live with us. A most excellent woman is that mother-in-law of mine; I respect her very much. Till now my little Ida scarcely left my side, and although that is very nice, yet one wants to be alone a little while occasionally. Now that she has her mother for company she will not cling to me so much, and I'll have more leisure time. Really, I will lead an ideally happy life."

The privy counsellor was just about to reverse the twirling of his thumbs, when the servant entered and put two packages upon the table.

"What are these?" asked the doctor.

"Dressing-gown and slippers for you to try on, Herr Privy Counsellor," answered the servant.

"Very well. I'll try them on by and by," re-

plied the doctor, whereupon the servant withdrew.

After a while he got up for the purpose of opening one of the parcels.

"At last!" said he, stretching himself serenely, "I'll be able to enjoy a dressing-gown and slippers, which hitherto I have only known by name. After being so many years cramped up in a frock-coat and patent leather boots, a dressing-gown and slippers will be an inexpressible pleasure. When at home, I'll wear a dressing-gown altogether; and as I shall be at home a good deal now, I'll order two gowns, one a little heavier than the other; also two pairs of slippers——"

He had almost untied the package containing the dressing-gown when the servant entered, and announced, "Madame Baldrian."

"Will be pleased to see her," said the doctor, though, truth to say, he would rather have tried on his dressing-gown.

A moment later and that lady sailed into the room.

"Good morning, my dear Privy Counsellor!" she began, immediately upon entering. "Your excellent mother-in-law has informed me of her arrival, and I hasten to welcome her."

"Very kind in you, Madame Baldrian!" said Privy Counsellor Staberow.

"She wrote me that she intends to go travelling with you and Ida through Italy and Switzerland," continued the match-maker.

The doctor's face assumed a peculiar expression.

"My mother-in-law must have meant it as a joke," replied the privy counsellor, casting an incredulous glance upon the lady.

"Oh, no," she remonstrated. "I think your mother-in-law is in earnest about the matter. It will

be perfectly charming for you to travel with your beautiful wife and handsome mother-in-law, to climb the heaven-soaring Alps and Vesuvius——"

"But I have seen Mount Vesuvius and climbed the heaven-reaching Alps, my dear madame," replied the doctor, somewhat apprehensively. "I visited them when I was a student. The Jungfrau, the Vale of Chamouny, the Grossglockner—I know them all. I also ascended Mount Vesuvius. Why should I go there again? It is not likely that those places have changed much since I was there!"

"And your wife?" asked Madame Baldrian.

"Well, my wife hasn't seen much," returned the privy counsellor, "but I'll describe all those places to her."

"That will be very entertaining and instructive to her!" said Madame Baldrian, an ironic twitch playing about the angles of her mouth.

"Yes, I think so too!" affirmed Dr. Staberow, who after his fright seemed to regain courage and assurance. "I did not marry for the purpose of tramping about, but in order to rest and to live comfortably."

Madame Baldrian made a roguish face.

"H'm!" she ejaculated. "But you will go into society and to balls?"

"Oh no!" replied the privy counsellor. "I have danced enough in my younger days, and have gone about so long in tight boots and a frock-coat that I am resolved never to put them on again."

"And your wife?" asked the matrimonial agent.

"My wife has danced enough too," replied the doctor; "moreover, she does not care for dancing. She has been brought up by a very strict mother, who does not approve of such frivolities, who on her side was guided by a very strict husband, the late Major Mertens. Ida will, therefore, not miss

what she never possessed. She will be contented with quiet happiness and a peaceful life. She will be satisfied to make fancy work, play the piano—to which I will listen seated while in my comfortable chair, and enjoy it very much."

"Very nice!" said the match-maker.

"Don't you think so?" asked the privy counsellor, smiling self-sufficiently.

"I fear, though, that the excessive pleasures which you map out for Ida may be too taxing for such a tender creature as she is," retorted Madame Baldrian, with another roguish smile. "Just think: playing the piano, doing fancy work, your company while you are seated in a large, comfortable chair—you must not tax her so, Herr Privy Counsellor! But I must go now and see my dear friend. Adieu for the present!"

The privy counsellor looked at her with a puzzled expression on his countenance.

"You need not trouble yourself, my dear madame," said he; "I hear my mother-in-law-coming."

In the next minute the door opened and the relict of Major Mertens entered the room.

The ladies rushed at each other, interchanged vociferous kisses, and hugged one another.

"My dear, dear Emma!" joyously exclaimed the relict of the Merchant Baldrian.

"My dear, dear Eglantine!" rapturously cried the relict of Major Mertens.

"How is dear Ida?" asked Madame Baldrian, when the ebullition of the happy greeting had subsided somewhat and the ladies had seated themselves upon the sofa, while the privy counsellor took a seat opposite to them.

"Well, passably," returned Madame Mertens; "but she is still so agitated, so anxious, so shy—but how could that be otherwise?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the privy counsellor, "I noticed none of her shyness nor any anxiety. Why should she be so?"

Madame Mertens threw a stern and reproving glance at her son-in-law.

"You don't understand these things, my dear son-in-law," said she, throwing her head slightly backward. "Into a mother's heart a daughter pours out her feelings more freely than into that of her newly acquired husband."

The privy counsellor looked quite embarrassed.

"Would you like to see Ida now, my dear Eglantine?" asked Madame Mertens, turning to her friend. "She is engaged in selecting ball and travelling costumes."

The privy counsellor started in affright and pricked up his ears.

"Ball and travelling costumes?" he managed to stammer out.

"Yes; what about them?" retorted the mother-in-law. "We intend to travel first, and when we return we will give and attend a number of balls."

The privy counsellor began to feel very uncomfortable, and he looked alternately, first at his mother-in-law, and then at Madame Baldrian.

"How astonished he looks!" said Madame Mertens to her friend. "It is well we didn't tell him everything beforehand."

A cold shiver ran through the doctor's system.

"This is then a sort of pre-arranged scheme—is it?" he asked.

"Not at all," returned his mother-in-law; "it was a wise suggestion of our good friend, Madame Baldrian, here, who properly weighs all circumstances, and whose experience is very great indeed. She has an inimitable way of adapting everything, to suit all parties; and if the parties do not suit

each other, then they must be made to suit. And if in this process the lady is cared for more than the gentleman, it is not a matter to be surprised at, for he is already greatly in advance of her. How unhappy our daughters would be if we handed them over unprotected to the egotistic will of the husbands, who only care for their own comfort and pleasure, and who are totally regardless of what is due to their life-companions."

The privy counsellor looked anxiously at Madame Baldrian.

"And you have arranged it thus?" he asked.

"It affords me much pleasure to be able to say that my efforts have been crowned with success!" answered the match-maker, bowing courteously. "Everything that is possible to do I will do. I never spare myself any trouble and labor. My friend will bear me out in this statement."

The relict of the major cordially pressed the hand of her coadjutor.

"Go now, my dear Eglantine, to Ida," said Madame Mertens, "and assist her with your good taste in making the necessary selections. I deem it my duty to make my dear son-in-law understand his position, and therefore wish to be alone with him for a quarter of an hour."

Madame Baldrian got up, and although a shudder ran through the privy counsellor's frame, still he did not forget the courtesy due to the fair sex, for he attended the lady to the door, which he opened for her.

"What do you wish to convey with those eyes of yours?" asked Madame Baldrian, as she bowed to him before passing out.

Dr. Staberow stooped a little and, with suppressed rage that still had a twang of his old time satanic humor, whispered to her:

"I solemnly assure you that I'll fight a duel with my mother-in-law before I'll climb Mount Vesuvius again."

"What are you two gossiping about there?" asked the relict of the major, noticing their confabulations.

"He has only paid me a nice compliment," replied the match-maker, laughingly, skipping into the adjacent parlor; and then the privy counsellor, swallowing his wrath and determined to brave the worst, crawled back to his chair.

"Now, my good Staberow, come here and listen to what I have to say," said Madame Mertens.

"Very well, my dear mother-in-law," he replied, unwillingly moving his chair about an inch nearer to her.

"As I already told you, I deem it my duty to make your position clear to you," began his dear mother-in-law after she had satisfactorily arranged the folds of her dress. "Listen to me attentively. It may have appeared strange to you that I have not, like so many other mothers, chosen a husband for my daughter who had already squandered his life in the follies of the world. Such a marriage is now-a-days considered a very desirable one. You no doubt took me for a very clever woman, but I was only wise and cautious. My kind friend, Madame Baldrian and I, long sought an ideal man for a son-in-law, for I did not want an elegant, fashionable—"

"Used up man," interrupted the privy counsellor. "You have already told me that, and I hope that you have found that I fulfil your expectations."

"Entirely, my dear Staberow," replied the mother-in-law, "and that makes me very happy."

"Now, frankness, you know, begets frankness, and one confession deserves another," she added smiling. "Tell me candidly, for, I can penetrate into

the very bottom of your soul, did you not think to yourself that you had an awfully pokey and tedious mother-in-law? There is no need for you to answer, for I know what you would say anyway—but you are mistaken, although you are a very sagacious privy counsellor and an accomplished physician."

The doctor bowed profoundly in acknowledgment of the compliments.

"You were mistaken, my apparent rigor was only assumed for the purpose of carrying out a certain plan," added the relict of Major Mertens.

"Delighted to hear it!" said Staberow, bowing again.

"Let me unfold to you my philosophical plan, my dear son-in-law," spoke Madame Mertens, further, "which, at the same time, will explain why I acted in the manner I did. A young man of twenty goes out into the world, and all the pleasures of life meet him at every turn. But what use does he make of them? He soon converts all his beautiful dreams into ugly realities, and scatters the treasures of his love to the four winds. That lasts ten, fifteen, twenty years; then he says to himself: 'I have enough;' because he has no more fantasy left to dream of, no heart to love with, no legs to dance with it. The time has come when he says to himself these sensible words, and which, no doubt, you have already heard: 'I have enough.'"

"That is not applicable to me," interjected the privy counsellor.

"I know it very well," said his mother-in-law, nodding her head sapiently. "You certainly belong to a better class; you are an example of the following, for instance, which says: 'The devil take this everlasting driving about to visit sick people! When one has done this thing for twenty years he gets tired of it, and longs for rest. I would like to

marry—that is to say, I want a wife with enough money to enable me to live comfortably for the rest of my life, and confine my practice to only a few hour's office consultation every day. It might pay me for the sacrifice I'd have to make. At any rate, under those circumstances, one could afford to make an end of his bachelorhood.'"

"She has read my thoughts almost word for word," mentally said the privy counsellor, unable to suppress an outwardly pleasing mien.

"And do you know, my dear son-in-law, the meaning of the phrase, 'To make an end of it?'" continued Madame Mertens. "It means this: A young and beautiful girl, with her heart, her youth, and her beauty entirely preserved, marries one who has preserved nothing for her. She still has all the bright hopes of the Future; he has only the shadowy remembrance of the Past!"

"Perfectly correct!" remarked the doctor, smiling gravely.

"She has but just awakened," continued the lady, "and he is about to fall asleep."

"Perfectly correct," repeated the privy counsellor, smiling still more gravely.

"She wishes to run, to fly; he is chained to his arm-chair; not on account of rheumatism or gout, but because he is satiated with pleasure, and now cares only for his comfort. In one word, my dear Staberow, the wife wants to begin life, and the husband desires to give it up. That's unpleasant, isn't it?"

"Yes, very," replied the doctor, whose mind was busy with some queer questionings.

"You seem to be convinced of the truth of my remarks," the mother-in-law went on, "and that pleases me very much. For I do not speak theoretically or from mere hearsay, but from personal

experience. I have myself gone through just such circumstances as these. Look at this medallion," she added, opening a locket that was suspended from her neck, and which she held out toward him as far as the short gold chain would permit.

The doctor cast a glance upon it.

"Come closer and take a good look at it," commanded the mother-in-law.

The privy counsellor, with a low groan, slowly got up from his comfortable arm-chair and took a good look at the medallion.

"A handsome man!" said he. "A fine form!"

"This is a picture of my dear husband," remarked the mother-in-law, with a mixed expression of pride and resentment; "the deceased Major Mertens, of the Hussars, as you readily perceive by his uniform. At the time this was taken he was still on active duty. Yes, Staberow, he was a handsome man, very handsome—especially on horseback!" she added with increased warmth.

"Then why did you have him painted on foot?" asked the privy counsellor, with a twinge of sarcasm, sinking back into his soft arm-chair.

"He was the handsomest officer in his regiment," proceeded the relict of the Major, not noticing the doctor's ironical question; "the whole town spoke of his deeds—of his adventures. Oh, he was captivating, my Mertens was; and I allowed myself to be captivated by him," she added, in a rapturously-sadly tone of voice; "but, unfortunately, I was the last he captivated, for he married me. I was awfully dazzled, and soon found I was fearfully deceived. His fame and beauty were not destined to cheer my young heart very long, for the day after our marriage he handed in his resignation, and four weeks later he took off his beautiful uniform."

"Oh," uttered the doctor, sarcastically, "what a pity!"

"Wasn't it?" observed mother-in-law Mertens, regretfully. After a moment's silence, she went on in a half-sad tone that echoed her long past condition.

"I gave him my whole heart, my beauty, my youth; I kept nothing from him; but he had preserved very little for the handsome young girl that I then was. I was awake and he asleep."

"He did not snore, too, did he?" interjected the physician?" who seemed to be possessed by the very devil again.

But his affectionate mother-in-law was too deeply absorbed in dreaming of the past to notice his vile insinuation.

"I wanted to run, to dance, to fly," she went on with her elegy, in the same sad tone of voice; "but he had no longer a desire for anything of that kind. He sat down in his big arm-chair and smoked a long pipe."

"And used execrable tobacco," threw in the doctor, contemptuously. After a moment he added: "It was a great pity. No doubt you supposed that you married an officer in active service."

"Yes, and found he was only an invalid," added the mother-in-law, sighing deeply, her memory-laden head dropping upon her breast.

"These majors are terrible creatures!" exclaimed the privy counsellor, with hypocritical sympathy.

"On the day after our wedding he put on a dressing-gown," continued Madame Mertens, with her jeremiade. "What a horribly prosaic thing a dressing-gown is! How can one wearing a dressing-gown inspire a woman with lofty sentiments?"

The privy counsellor got up, walked to the table, took the package of dressing-gowns and stealthily hid it.

"What did you do there?" asked the mother-in-law, looking around.

"Nothing! I only wanted to catch a fly," replied Staberow, resuming his seat.

"But that was not all," complained the relict of the major. "Soon after our wedding my husband gave up wearing his beautifully polished boots with spurs, the jingling of which was such delightful music in my ears, and stuck his feet into horrible sleepers. How prosaic such things are! How can one inspire a body with lofty sentiment when he wears sleepers?"

The privy counsellor got up a second time, went to the table, took the package of sleepers and quickly hid it.

"What made you get up now?" asked the mother-in-law, looking around again.

"I only wanted to catch a fly," unblushingly he replied, resuming his seat.

"Where do all the flies come from?" asked Madame Mertens, gazing about the room.

"Probably from the street," answered the physician. "Go on with your story, I am highly interested in it."

The face of his mother-in-law again became overspread with a dreamy expression.

"If I asked him to take me to a ball," she went on, "he would say that he had danced for twenty years, and that he now wanted to rest. And if I said to him, 'You do not love me, you have no heart for love,' he would say, 'I have loved entirely too much.' Can one be satisfied under such circumstances, I ask you? Can a young wife, full of life, be contented with what her husband has already enjoyed? You will understand my feelings, my dear Staberow."

The relict of the major sighed again and fell

back in her seat, totally overcome by her sad feelings.

"The major was a brute!" said the doctor with well feigned anger.

"I thank you, Staberow," replied his mother-in-law, gratefully pressing his hand. "You have a feeling heart, and hence you will admit, if you possess the least sense of justice, the sagacity I exercised in selecting you as a husband for my daughter. Who can blame a mother when she is guided entirely by love and interest for her child? But I did not deceive you, dear Staberow, my dear friend Madame Baldrian and I were actuated by the best of motives for you."

The privy counsellor bowed gratefully in acknowledgment.

"We do not want to lay it at your door as a sin," continued the mother-in-law, "what is simply brought about by the spirit of the times. No doubt, like many others, you have thought, 'I will now take unto myself a little wife and rest from my toil and drudgery. It is true I have not enjoyed much of what is called life since my student days, but then I am now too old and dull for such things; travelling and society afford me pleasure no more, I only want rest and comfort. My wife, to be sure, shall share it with me.' But too much rest and comfort are apt to become monotonous and in the end may render life unbearable. But you are still endowed with love of life; my excellent friend quickly perceived that when we selected you, and you may therefore thank us if we stimulate it before it dies out altogether."

The privy counsellor acknowledged this with a bow, but his face bore an expression of wretchedness.

"I have related to you my own life," continued Madame Mertens, "because I do not wish that my

daughter should lead a similar one. Hence with the aid of my excellent friend we have selected a husband for her who is still uncorrupted, and not used up, although he has already passed forty, one who is actively engaged in a highly honorable profession instead of spending his days in pleasure and idleness—one who would bring her a fresh albeit no longer young heart, and to whom the joys of life would be as new, as they will be to her. You two may now partake of all the permissible pleasures to your hearts' content. Tell me, now, whether my plan was not a good one, whether I did not act wisely and in the best interests for you both?"

"Certainly, certainly!" said the son-in-law who seemed to be convinced, but not agreeably.

"My daughter Ida," said the providential mother-in-law, "enjoys going into society very much. She is an untiring dancer, she will accompany you everywhere, Staberow."

"Very nice, very nice!" said the physician, barely able to suppress his vexation.

"And I, too, will accompany you everywhere, dear Staberow!" cried the relict of the major, jumping off the sofa in an ecstacy of joy.

"You, too?" asked the privy counsellor, rising from his seat, and seeking to suppress his annoyance by walking up and down the room.

"Yes, I too, I too!" answered the mother-in-law, following the doctor step by step. "I reserved this as a surprise to you. Yes, my dear son-in-law, you will have the delightful task of making two women happy. Having been prevented from enjoying life hitherto I intend in the future to make up for lost time. I will attend balls and concerts, will participate in all those intoxicating delights that I now know only by name. I will enjoy myself, Staberow, I will slake my burning desire for pleasure; my

daughter and I, under your guidance, will hurl ourselves headlong into the whirlpool of social life; we will make a tour of the world and not rest till we have seen everything, or until inexorable death snatches away the cup of enjoyment from our lips. What do you say to that, Staberow? Wouldn't it be grand? Wouldn't it be heavenly?"

As an earnest of her delight, she threw her arms around his neck and showered half a dozen burning kisses upon his left ear.

"Yes, that will be heavenly," gasped the privy counsellor, almost choked to death by the tight arms of his affectionate mother-in-law.

"We will never part!" rapturously cried the relict of Major Mertens, hobbling after the privy counsellor, and making repeated efforts to reach his ear with her lips. "Can you imagine what happiness there is in store for you, for me, and for my daughter?"

She was about to make another effort to reach his ear when the door was opened, and Ida entered.

"Come here, Ida!" cried her mother, in a jubilant voice; "your husband is beside himself with joy!"

"Oh, this is grand! this is heavenly!" cried the jolly little woman, vehemently, throwing her arms around her husband's, and kissing her mother over his shoulder.

She then turned to her husband, and said to him, with a most charming pout:

"How can one dissemble so long, that's what I would like to know! I thought you said you didn't care to travel for pleasure, but wanted to stay home and rest?"

"He is very modest, Ida," observed Madame Mertens. "He did not have the temerity to propose those things to us so soon; but when I in-

formed him of the pleasures that were in store for him, he literally became wild."

"Oh, you dear, kind, love of a husband!" exclaimed Ida, embracing him again.

"Oh, you delightful, charming son-in-law!" cried the Widow Mertens, hugging him from behind.

The poor doctor looked inexpressibly wretched, and had great difficulty in retaining his equilibrium between both ladies.

"Is it really true that you are happy—perfectly happy?" asked Ida, suddenly releasing her husband so that he came near being pulled over backward by his mother-in-law.

"Yes, it is true," answered the privy counsellor, in a voice which he would use if he informed one of his patients that he had to die.

"But you say it so sadly," said Ida, smiling at him.

"Did I speak sadly?" asked the privy counsellor. "Then it must be because extremes meet."

He now made strenuous efforts to appear happy, and repeated the words:

"Ah, I am so happy—perfectly happy!"

"There, that sounds much better!" cried the little wife, gleefully clapping her small hands.

She nestled closely to him and said:

"Would you prefer to travel through Switzerland first?"

"No!" replied the privy counsellor, somewhat *distrait.*

"Through Italy, then?" she asked again.

"No!" replied her husband, once more.

"What?" asked the mother-in-law, very much astonished.

"Excuse me! I thought we were still talking of Switzerland," he said, correcting himself, "To be sure I'd like to go to Italy—very much."

"Then we'll climb Mount Vesuvius—how delightful that will be!" exclaimed Ida, her face radiant with delight.

"Of course we will climb Mount Vesuvius," assented the poor doctor, his face assuming a grave expression and a twinge of pain passed through his soul.

"But it will be some time before we can leave," Ida chatted on, "and meanwhile we will amuse ourselves here. We can go riding every day. I am passionately fond of riding on horseback."

"I, too!" joyfully exclaimed the mother-in-law.

Everything grew dark before the privy counsellor's eyes.

"Are you fond of riding on horseback?" asked Ida of her husband.

"No, I never sat on the back of a horse," replied the doctor.

"Then you must go to the riding-school at once," cried the mother-in-law. "Ida and I will go with you and see that you profit by your lessons."

"O yes, I will watch you, dear hubby, and see how you learn to ride," cried the little wife, ecstatically. "You will begin to-morrow, won't you, dear?"

"Yes!" replied the doctor, in an undertaker's tone of voice.

Ida gave him a kiss in gratefulness, and his mother-in-law was about to make one more attempt to reach his left ear again, but, by an adroit movement, he avoided it.

"Tell me, my dear Staberow," asked the relict of Major Mertens, "how is it that I did not see even one pair of patent leather boots in your wardrobe. Have you none at all?"

"Why, hubby dear, is it really so? Have you no patent leather boots?" asked Ida, greatly concerned.

The privy counsellor groaned lowly from mental anguish.

"I recently threw away the last I had; but I will presently order a new pair."

"Yes, you must order several pairs without delay," cried the mother-in-law.

"Be sure and don't forget that," chimed in the little wife. "We have many calls to make."

"Yes, and balls and the theatre to attend. We even intend to give a ball at our house."

Little Ida was literally carried away with joy.

"Oh, we will dance a great deal—won't we, dear?" she cried. "Come, let us have a dance now."

With these words she seized her husband, who stood like a marble pillar, began to sing a merry polka, and was just in the act of twirling the husband of her choice about the room, when the servant entered and announced that dinner was ready.

Ida let go her husband, and the latter, with the last remnant of strength left him, gallantly offered one arm to his kind, affectionate, and considerate mother-in-law, and the other to his charming little wife, and led them into the dining-room.

"That Madame Baldrian is a dangerous woman, after all!" he sighed, from the remotest depths of his soul.

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG GIRLS.

Young girls! What an amount of poetry is contained in these two words!

Involuntarily one thinks of buds that are just about to develop into flowers, when they disseminate their first, tender, but, for all that, most intoxicating fragrance around them.

They are still so lovably coy that their leaves barely dare to open themselves, for fear that a profane gaze would penetrate into the tender mysteries within them.

The bud is still unaware that it charms the beholder, and hence charms him all the more.

After it has blossomed into a flower it will attract the eye more than before, captivate our senses more, but our hearts less.

The bud is undesigning; the flower is designing.

In the calix of the bud no particle of dust has yet penetrated, no profane gaze has entered. Within it pure, uncorrupted nature still reigns.

The face of the flower, however, has already flirted with the sun, and its cheeks have already been kissed by the wind.

The bud divines, but the flower knows.

The sensible man will, therefore, prefer to pluck a bud; the senseless one prefers a flower.

The first would like to put the bud to his heart, and allow it to unfold itself there; the second to stick the flower in his button-hole, to feed his senses on it, and to be proud with it.

A bud will arouse one's enthusiasm; a flower will excite passionate ardor.

One hesitates to pluck a bud, but he will quickly snatch a flower.

The bud excites adoration; the flower affords enjoyment. The bud is the blissfully-anxious presagement of great happiness; the flower already bears within it the full knowledge of the past.

The bud serenely develops into a flower; the flower wilts and topples into the arms of death.

The bud strives to become a flower; the flower, when it begins to wilt, would like to become a bud again.

We would ask the gentle reader to leave dusty Berlin and come with us over a dusty road to dusty Charlottenburg.

We will stop here before a park ornamented with old trees and young bushes, shake the dust from our clothes as best we can, and pass up the shady walk leading to an elegant residence. This residence, Commercial Counsellor Miller had caused to be built for himself when he became rich and had retired from business.

From a room on the right-hand side the sound of excited, impatient piano playing is heard. As some persons must be there, we will turn in that direction.

We enter an elegantly furnished room, from which a certain air of refinement that it is impossible to describe is wafted toward us, except to say that it is one of the utmost refinement.

A sombre light, dulled by tinted shades, pervades the room, the softest carpets are upon the floor, the finest draperies and decorations may be seen, pictures and statuary such as one would scarcely expect to see in a room much frequented by young girls, are upon and against the walls, and, in

addition, a gray parrot upon a pole, to whom the excited and impatient playing on the piano seems to be very annoying.

Like a ball lost in a soft, upholstered chair, sits a little, pleasant looking man, reading a newspaper.

The thinly scattered hairs are carefully combed up from the sides and from behind toward the crown of his head, which they only partly cover; one short, sausage-like lower limb is slung over the other, and the little round eyes blink as pleasantly as ever in the columns of the paper, which is held by short, thick arms before a stumpy, roundish nose.

Now and then a shade of displeasure sweeps over the round, fat face, and a nervous twitch of impatience, like an electric shock, runs through his frame from head to foot.

What could have happened to the commercial counsellor to-day, who is usually so good-natured, and happy?

Is it the toothache that plagues him, or is it because his chiropodist has neglected to call to-day?

Or is it some deep, tragical mental pain that tortures his mortal form?

Or again, is it because he ate too many grapes in his arbor?

No! It was none of these causes that, like an agonizing flame, coursed through his frame, for every time he suffered a spasm, every time the fat-imbedded eyes closed convulsively, so that a tear was squeezed out of them, every time the shining scalp trembled, so that the few hairs that were carefully brushed up from behind and sides approached closer to one another, like two partners in a contra-dance, every time the short, thick limb thrown across its fellow jerked in the air, and the newspaper in the short, fat fingers rustled as if it sympathized with the reader, the commercial counsellor darted an im-

patient, angry look at his youngest daughter, Wanda, who sat at the piano and played in that hasty, nervous, and excited manner which we heard from without.

What had the poor child done to him that he darted such angry glances at her?

He was always known to be such a kind, affectionate, and indulgent father, and Wanda such a loving and dutiful daughter—though, to be sure, today her face bore an expression of malice.

She was a charming girl and, were it not for the malicious expression on her countenance, one would have been tempted to bite her, she looked so neat and sweet.

The graceful head was enveloped in a profusion of fine silky hair; the forehead denoted a degree of firmness; from the large dark eyes peered feeling, childishness, and naïveté; the little dimples in the soft cheeks, that were beautifully tinted, denoted roguishness, and the full pink lips seemed not indisposed to kiss right heartily if they once got a taste.

Although the girl was seated, still it was easy to see that her figure was charming.

Her neck was beautifully slender; her bust was enveloped in some white, light fabric that showed that the bud was rapidly developing into a flower; her waist was beautifully shaped, without the least aid from art, and below, upon the pedal of the piano, such a little foot was seen that it was a mystery how it could sustain her body.

Wanda played a gay polka, but she herself did not look a bit gay, and the longer her white little fingers ran over the keys, the more provoked, the more displeased, and the more impatient her face appeared, and often it seemed to afford her special delight to strike a false note with all her might, so as to cause the piano actually to shake and jangle.

And every time the parrot started up frightened, and protested against the noise with a screech. A smile of satisfaction and delight would hover for a moment around the girl's pretty mouth, and she would give the piano a still louder thump and strike a false note still more violently, as if it afforded her the greatest pleasure in the world to create as much discord as possible.

"Don't you intend to stop to-day at all, Wanda?" cried the commercial counsellor, whom the jarring false notes literally started out of his chair.

"Will I never get married, papa?" cried the young lady, giving the piano a final thundering thump, striking half a dozen false notes at once, and then facing him with as excited a mien as his.

The little round man bounced out of his upholstered arm-chair like a rubber-ball, and remained stock-still, staring his daughter in the face in the utmost astonishment.

"What?" he exclaimed, when he regained his speech. "What was that you said? When are you going to get married?"

"Yes, that's what I said, papa!" replied the young lady, very coolly. "After all," she went on, shaking out and punching a certain part of her attire, as ladies do nowadays whenever they rise from a sitting posture, "you needn't think that I am so particularly anxious to get married. I only want not to be obliged to play the piano. I can't stand it any longer! Ma plagues me to death with it. I must practise, practise! And then comes the piano-teacher, who finds fault, first with one thing and then with another, and who, for the next lesson, gives me a passage which I must practise a hundred and seventy-five times, and which isn't right after all when he comes again. Oh," exclaimed the young lady, running to the piano and striking the keys a

violent blow, so that the instrument fairly trembled, "I hate this instrument of torture!"

"Oh, Wanda!" cried her father, looking at her utterly astonished.

"Forgive me, papa," returned the young lady in a pleasant voice, having quickly banished the anger from her pretty face. "But you have no idea how terrible and irritating to one's nerves this eternal piano-playing is."

"Yes, yes, I believe you," said the kind little man; "I am obliged to listen to it often enough. I am just as unfortunate as you are, my child."

"No, papa!" exclaimed Wanda, with animation; "I am three times more unfortunate than you are; for, in the first place, I have to play the music; secondly, I must listen to it; and thirdly, I am obliged to listen to it oftener than you are, for you can at least run away if it becomes very bad."

The commercial counsellor became agreeable again, and was soon lost in thought.

"But when one is married," continued the young lady, with an air of great importance, "one has other matters to attend to than to play the piano. The piano is then not regarded as a musical instrument, but as an article of furniture; it is not a very ornamental article, it is true, but it is at least a quiet one, and that is the main thing."

"I don't suppose all girls think so," said the little commercial counsellor.

"Most wives act so, any way," returned Wanda. "There is Annie Frohberg, who as a girl was passionately fond of playing on the piano, but as a wife she hardly ever looks at it."

"Yes, in that instance you are certainly right," said her father.

"Is there no news from the Frohbergs yet?" asked Fräulein Wanda, quickly.

"They are still travelling," replied the little round man.

The young lady suddenly became serious and fell to thinking.

"Papa, what made Madame Frohberg leave Berlin so suddenly?" she asked. "She was always fond of living in the city."

"I don't know," replied her father with a puzzled air. "Many reasons are given for it, but none of them are correct, I think."

Just then the servant entered and reported that Madame Baldrian would like to have an interview with the master of the house.

"With great pleasure!" replied the latter, and a moment after that lady sailed into the room like a ship running before the wind.

"Good morning, my dear madame," cheerily addressing her said the little commercial counsellor.

"Good morning, my dear Herr Miller. Good morning, my dear Wanda," replied the dispenser of marital bliss, on entering, giving the father her hand and kissing the daughter.

"Well, what is the news?" asked the commercial counsellor in a low voice.

"I just left him!" whispered the match-maker.

"Ah!" ejaculated the little man.

"Who?" asked Wanda, having overheard the word "him" uttered by the lady.

Although it is but a little word, still it is so interesting to the young ladies that the mere mention of it is sure to awaken attention.

Madame Baldrian winked to the commercial counsellor in a most significant manner, and then glanced from the outer angle of her left eye at the young lady.

"Wanda, my dear child," said her papa forthwith, "go and practise your piano lesson a little more."

"Why, papa," replied the young lady, "you just now said that you couldn't stand it any longer."

The commercial counsellor turned slightly red in the face.

"That is so," said he, apologetically; "but our dear friend here, Madame Baldrian, likes to hear you play so much. Play that polka again for us, dear Wanda."

The young lady threw back her head in a manner to make her ringlets dance around about her neck like defiant little snakes, turned quickly on her heel, and in the next minute was engaged in thumping the keys with so much vehemence that the piano shook and jingled.

"Oh!" cried the commercial counsellor, making a wry face, and clapping his hands over both ears. "Not so loud! That is altogether too loud!"

Wanda slightly moderated the force with which she played, and the commercial counsellor took the marriage instigatoress to the furthest window, and again whispered in her ear.

"Well, what does he want?"

"What do you suppose?" she whispered back. "He wants to be your son-in-law!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the little man, "we haven't got so far yet. It is necessary——"

"What more is necessary?" asked Madame Baldrian, impatiently, and annoyed somewhat.

"Thunder and lightning!" suddenly cried the commercial counsellor, making a fearful grimace, and drawing up one leg in the air.

"Heavens, what are you making such a face at me for?" said Madame Baldrian, recoiling frightened.

"I am not making a face at you at all, my dear Madame Baldrian," stammered the little man, again distorting his features and clapping his hands to his ears.

"What ails you then?" asked the match-maker, apprehensively.

"It is Wanda's playing!" replied the little man, stamping first with one foot and then the other, as if he was standing on hot coals. "Heavens, that girl is at it again! Wanda, Wanda! Not so loud! I can't stand it any more!"

"Neither can I!" retorted that young lady, quickly getting off the piano stool.

"You mustn't forget that the young people have known one another nearly six weeks already," said the match-maker, in a low voice, to the commercial counsellor when the latter had somewhat regained his equanimity.

"Well, say six weeks," returned Papa Miller; "what does that signify? I courted my wife three years before we became engaged."

"Oh, my good commercial counsellor," whispered Madame Baldrian, "those good old days are gone forever! If we did not persevere and with some energy, the young men of to-day would fall asleep ten times over before a wedding could be brought about. Do not plague me so by throwing such foolish obstacles in my path, but leave me to arrange the matter according to my way. You may depend on it that I understand how to manage such matters ten times better than you do. The affair is ripe for final conclusions."

"What is ripe, papa?" asked Wanda, whose womanly curiosity had led her to creep behind the two plotters.

The commercial counsellor looked around, frightened.

"Our grapes," returned he, energetically. "Go into the arbor and pluck some; they are very wholesome."

Wanda very well understood that she was not

wanted at the conference, and that she was only sent away so that she would not learn any of the secrets they were discussing. She pouted, jerked her head a little backward, and then lightly retired from the room, walking like a sylph upon the air.

"Where is my dear friend, your wife?" asked Madame Baldrian, in a sweetly anxious voice.

"She does not feel very well to-day," returned the commercial counsellor. "The sea-baths at Ostend seem not to have agreed with her as well as with me. She complains, first of one thing and then of another, and often has to keep her room for several days together."

"I am truly sorry to hear it," observed the marriage plotter, in doleful tones. "We will, therefore, have to settle the matter between ourselves to-day, although I generally prefer to treat with the mothers in all such affairs. They take more interest in these things, and give me less trouble and less work."

"My wife, in fact, hasn't the least intention of marrying off the girls as yet," remarked the kind little man; "she thinks they are altogether too young to marry."

"Oh, papperlappap!" returned the female hymeneal agent. "That is only thrashing old straw over again, often resorted to by the parents, but which the daughters do not wish to hear of. What harm can it do to the children to marry young? On the contrary, it must benefit them greatly!"

"Do you really think so?" asked Papa Miller, looking shrewd.

"Of course!" replied Madame Baldrian, assuming a decided air. "I certainly ought to know that, if anybody!"

"Yes, one would think so," observed the com-

mercial counsellor. "I think myself—but it is hard to decide——"

"What?" cried Madame Baldrian, energetically. "Out with it! What have you got to say against the gentleman?"

Papa Miller smiled in an embarrassed manner, and looking at the match-maker, apologetically, said:

"I have no fault to find with him, whatever, my dear friend; he would suit me very well as a son-in-law, provided I am not obliged to give him my daughter."

Madame Baldrian's face became suffused with a choleric redness.

"Oh! you are a fool!" she exclaimed. "If you do not want to part with your daughters, you may keep them!"

She then turned abruptly and walked toward the door.

Little Miller stood sad and undecided for a moment; then he ran after her, caught her before she had reached the door, and held her by her gown.

"Listen a moment, my dear madame," he said.

"Well, then speak, but don't tear my dress," answered Madame Baldrian, turning quickly around.

"You ought not to blame a father for hesitating between two desires," said he in a mollifying tone. "What father willingly would part with his daughters; and again, what father wants to keep them from marrying? Do you think it affords me pleasure to hear foolish people ask me almost every day, 'How is it that your pretty daughters do not get married? Such a pair of pretty and rich girls! Strange, very strange!' Do you think, my friend, that that affords me any pleasure? But what answer can I give. I certainly can't chalk it on my back that 'I have two young, beautiful, and rich daughters to marry. Wan-

derer when you read this turn to me and look at them.' "

"Well then," she said, "will you, or will you not? If not, then I'll have the honor to bid you adieu for the last time. Please to decide!"

"My God! what a fiery woman you are!" groaned Herr Miller, who seemed to be completely cowed by the onslaught of the match-maker. "Wait a little while and let us talk over the matter."

"I have no time to waste in talking," impatiently returned Madame Baldrian, "I must act. Once more, will you or will you not?"

Papa Miller breathed heavily.

"Well, for my part," said he, "if my daughter likes him, I am satisfied. But my child must not be forced, must not be compelled to give her consent. I insist upon that as a prime condition."

"Why, who would *compel* her to consent?" replied Madame Baldrian. "As if I would permit anyone to do it!"

The commercial counsellor looked steadily with his lively eyes at the matrimonial agent.

"Speak seriously with Louisa," continued the matrimonial agent, "and ascertain whether the candidate may call and propose to her, lest he becomes impatient and gives us the slip altogether."

"Very well," said the commercial counsellor, deciding finally, after sighing deeply; "very well, I'll go and look for Louisa and talk to her. Adieu, Madame Baldrian, for the present."

"Adieu Herr Commercial Counsellor Miller!"

After bowing, the tortured little man left the room, and barely was he gone when the inquisitive Wanda returned.

She had, in fact, been watching and waiting in the garden, and, as soon as she saw that Madame Baldrian was alone, she concluded that now was a good

time for her to return, in the hope of learning just a trifle of what was going on. It was not idle curiosity that prompted her to rejoin Madame Baldrian. Oh no! it was only the great interest she took in everything that concerned every member of her family which made her anxious to ascertain everything she possibly could.

"Well, my little pet," cried Madame Baldrian to Wanda, as soon as she appeared on the threshold, "this is very nice in you to come back and keep me company till papa returns."

"Isn't papa here?" asked the young lady, with feigned ignorance.

Madame Baldrian cast a searching look upon Fräulein Wanda.

"Shall I tell you a little secret?" said she, in a seductive voice.

"Yes, do, do, please!" cried the young lady, discarding at once the *rôle* she had assumed, and in inquisitive ecstasy clapping her hands.

"Will you promise, in return, to assist me a little in my plan?" asked the match-maker, further.

"Yes, oh, yes, with all my strength," replied the young lady, hastily.

The matrimonial agent walked up to Wanda, and, with a countenance expressive of the utmost importance, whispered into her ear, while her face spoke a volume of inquisitiveness: "Louisa will probably soon become engaged!"

Barely had the words fallen upon her ear when her face assumed an expression of the utmost disappointment.

"Is that all?" said she, pouting.

The marriage-maker was lost in astonishment.

"Yes, is that all?" repeated the young lady. "I have known that long ago. In the first place, I gathered as much from papa's and mamma's whis-

perings; and in the second, Louisa herself has spoken to me about it."

"In that case, it is, to be sure, no news to you," said the hymeneal plotter.

"None whatever!" substantiated Fräulein Wanda.

"Will you, nevertheless, assist me to prevail upon your sister that she give her consent?" asked Madame Baldrian.

Wanda shook her head sadly.

"Why should I part with my sister?" said she. "It will be altogether too monotonous to be alone."

"What secret did you expect to learn a while ago, my little beauty?" asked Madame Baldrian. "Did you have an idea in your head regarding yourself?"

"Why, certainly!" replied the young lady, pouting still more, and with still greater disappointment expressed in her face.

"May one ask what that idea was?" questioned the match-maker, further.

"Well, I thought that it was now my turn," spitefully answered she, jerking her little head slightly backward.

Madame Baldrian regarded her with a look full of admiration and affection.

"Are you so anxious to get married, child?" she asked, looking at the young lady tenderly.

"Yes; I am awfully anxious to get married!" exclaimed Wanda with feverish haste. "Because I will not be obliged to play on the piano then."

The matrimonial agent smiled.

"Have a little patience," said she, pressing a kiss upon the young girl's forehead. "It will be your turn as soon as your sister has put on the nuptial veil. I have already a charming young gentleman in prospect for you."

"Really?" cried Wanda, clapping her little hands

in pleasurable excitement. "What is his name? How does he look? When will I see him?"

"P'st, p'st, my child, not so fast! You will ascertain all that in good time. Will you now assist me to prevail upon Louisa?" she added in a supplicating tone.

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Fräulein Wanda. "It will be to my interest to get Louisa's consent. You may count upon me as a faithful confederate."

Madame Baldrian extended to Fräulein Wanda her right hand in token of fellowship, which the latter clasped in her's.

Just then the commercial counsellor, who was engaged in a lively conversation with his eldest daughter, came back from the garden.

When the little round man saw his youngest daughter in the room, he vigorously winked at her to withdraw, but that young lady paid not the least attention to him.

"Oh, stop that useless comedy!" cried the marriage-plotter, who instantly perceived the wry faces Papa Miller was making. "The little one knows what is going on, and she may as well know everything, instead of keeping a part of it from her, which will only excite her curiosity, and may provoke her to spoil our plans."

"For my part," said Papa Miller, whose spirits seemed to be depressed, while Wanda ran to her sister and began a whispered conversation with her, "I consent."

The elder sister was the opposite of the younger, and they, if seen together, would scarcely have been taken for relatives, still less for sisters.

Louisa was at least half a head taller than Wanda; her face was expressive of seriousness and calmness, which seemed somewhat strange for such a young girl, and it made her look rather older than she was.

"Well?" asked the marriage instigator in a low voice, of the commercial counsellor, while the two girls were engaged in chatting together, "Have you spoken with her?"

Papa Miller nodded.

"And will she have him?" questioned Madame Baldrian further.

"I don't know!" replied the little man, shrugging his shoulders and wrinkling his brow.

"What! you don't know?" asked the matrimonial agent, astonished.

"No," replied the fat little papa.

"Then she has rejected him," exclaimed Madame Baldrian, vehemently.

"No, not exactly," returned the commercial counsellor.

"Oh, my dear, good Miller, you annoy me to death to-day!" said the match-maker, somewhat irritated. "What has happened, anyway? How did you represent the affair to her? What reply did she make?"

Papa Miller's face assumed an expression of wretchedness, and he looked at the lady imploringly.

"Do not blame me, my dear friend," said he, humbly. "In fact I did not tell her anything; I was not able to bring it over my lips. Put yourself in a father's place! Talk with her, you will no doubt be able to do it better than I."

Madame Baldrian made a movement as if she would like to crawl out of her skin.

"Oh, these fathers!" she exclaimed. "How hard one's calling becomes when the mothers are ill!"

Like a man of war about to engage in a combat, she now steered toward Louisa, put her arm under her own, and began the attack.

"Well, my child," said she, "I came to-day to obtain a decision from you. You know that my

protégé loves you and seeks your hand. Your father has no fault to find with him, and he authorizes me to talk to you about this matter. Answer me, are you disposed to give your consent?"

Louisa became greatly embarrassed, and the little commercial counsellor was not much less so.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Louisa, after a while, "why this haste? I am in no such hurry at all!"

The fat face of her little, round papa became irradiated with delight.

"Bravo!" murmured he, rubbing his hands joyfully.

The female instigator of matrimony looked at him in surprise, and displeased.

"What was that you just said?" she asked, harshly.

The commercial counsellor became terror-stricken.

"I?" he managed to stammer. "I said nothing at all!" he added, as honestly as he possibly could.

"You said 'Bravo!'" cried Madame Baldrian, in the voice of a presiding judge.

"Oh, no!" replied he, defending himself.

"Yes, papa, you did say 'Bravo!'" said Fräulein Wanda, joining the prosecution now.

Little Miller looked at his youngest daughter in dismay.

"What is that to you, you little, pert thing?" he asked reprovingly, but which was considerably weakened by his own embarrassment.

"My God, the child takes an interest in the good fortune of her sister, don't you see?" said the match-maker, defending her confederate. "I think it is very kind in her to think so much of another."

"Even you do it, papa!" said Wanda, feeling perfectly satisfied with the defence offered in her behalf.

The commercial counsellor cast another look of

reproach at his youngest daughter, but much of its force was lost on the way.

After this little *intermezzo*, the matrimonial agent turned to Louisa again.

"Once more to business, my child!" she began anew. "If your maidenly modesty and coyness do not permit you to admit that you are in a hurry, you cannot, on the other hand, blame my *protégé* if, burning with ardent desire, he chafes at being prevented from throwing himself at the feet of his adored one. I am unable much longer to curb his impatience, and since you love him——"

Louisa made a movement as if she was affected by a strange sensation.

Madame Baldrian interrupted herself, and looked at the young lady sharply.

"Or, since you don't dislike him," she went on, "for you don't dislike him; isn't it so?"

"No," answered Louisa, her cheeks becoming slightly suffused, "I can't exactly say that I dislike him."

"There, do you see?" said Fräulein Wanda, in the hope of supporting her sister in her resolution.

"Then I see no reason for rejecting his hand," continued Madame Baldrian.

Louisa cast down her eyes and remained silent.

"Unless you like another better," proceeded the match-maker, casting a penetrating glance upon the young girl.

"Nonsense!" interjected Wanda, again. "Who is the gentleman she could like better? We live here like hermits and see hardly anyone, unless it is Herr Rarrer," she added laughingly, "whom papa lately became acquainted with at the Frohbergs, and who has since called on us several times."

Louisa smiled.

"On one occasion, he put a poppy head instead

of a raspberry into his mouth from sheer embarrassment," continued Fräulein Wanda, "and he came near being choked to death, and the last time he was here he got caught in the iron that has been set up in the garden for the moles."

"Very well, he is not the one," interrupted the marriage apostle, impatiently.

"Or else Privy Counsellor, Dr. Staberow," added Wanda, "but he recently got married."

"That's an old story!" said the hymeneal plotter, becoming more and more impatient.

"Then there only remains the legation counsellor, Frohberg," concluded Wanda, with the enumeration of the probable suitors for her sister's hand.

Louisa made another movement, but this one was altogether different from the former.

"But he is too old for you," went on Wanda. "Thirty-five and twenty don't fit very well. Besides, he held you over the baptismal font, and we can't love a man who has seen us in long clothes, neither can he love us. Moreover, were there any love between you two, it would have become apparent during your long acquaintance with each other. Hence, he too, must be left out of the count, and since I know of no other person whom you would like better than this gentleman, and since he loves you better than anyone else does, I see no reason why you should not accept him. Who knows whether you will ever make a better *partie!*"

Louisa was silent a while, and then said:

"I'll think over the matter, and let you know in a few days."

Wanda beat a devil's tattoo with her little foot upon the floor.

"Oh! Why don't you say in a few years!" she cried, jerking her head slightly backwards, as was

customary with her whenever anything happened that did not suit her.

"Why are you so intensely concerned about the matter?" asked Louisa, greatly astonished, gazing upon her sister.

"Why am I so much concerned about the matter?" went on Wanda with her customary liveliness. "Well, I should think you would readily guess why."

Here she stopped abruptly, became slightly embarrassed, and, in the hope of rectifying her slip of the tongue, added:

"It is but natural that I should interest myself in the future happiness of my only sister! It would be strange, indeed, if I did not do so."

Louisa extended her hand to her sister, accompanied by an affectionate glance.

"In addition, I venture to say that your intimate friend, the legation counsellor, will agree with me entirely. I have no doubt he will advise you to accept an offer such as is seldom tendered to any young lady."

"Very well; I'll consult him about it," said Louisa. "And, for the present, I'll reserve my decision."

"Then you won't have to wait long, my child," interjected Commercial Counsellor Miller. "I invited the legation counsellor to dine with us to-day, because the idea occurred to me, too, to consult him about this affair."

"All right, then," said Louisa, addressing herself to Madame Baldrian. "I'll consult with Herrn von Frohberg, and give you a definite answer this evening."

She bowed gracefully to that lady and then left the room.

Wanda walked close up to the matrimonial agent and whispered into her ear:

"You may depend upon me," said she; "you will always find me at my post!"

And then she ran after her sister so fast that her curls dangled about her head.

"This matter, then, is as good as settled," said little Miller, "for whatever Frohberg advises, so shall it be. And now I'll go into the garden and smoke a cigar."

"No, you won't, my dear commercial counsellor," said Madame Baldrian.

"And why not? if I may ask," inquired the little man, astonished.

"Because I have something more to say to you," answered the match-maker.

"What! another—?" asked little Miller, anxious and surprised at the same time.

"Yes, of course, another proposition," replied Madame Baldrian, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"Wait at least ten minutes," begged the little commercial counsellor, "till I have had a few puffs at my cigar. It is utterly impossible for me to listen to anything till I have smoked my cigar for ten minutes."

"Well, if you say it is utterly impossible, then I must yield," said the matrimonial agent; "but we can kill two birds with one stone, that is to say, we will go into the garden, you smoke your cigar, and I will lay my proposition before you. Are you satisfied, my dear commercial counsellor?"

The little papa nodded his head, and then, like a ball, rolled himself out into the garden, attended by the marriage plotter, like a man-of-war having in charge a conquered and disabled ship.

CHAPTER X.

A MISCALCULATION.

It was delightfully cool and shady in the garden, and when the little commercial counsellor had lit his cigar, he started, attended by his companion, for the long walk, which was hemmed in on one side by the wall and on the other by the *espalier*, roofed over with thick, green foliage and vine leaves, between which the bright, transparent grapes were seen hanging in clusters.

"Fire away, in God's name!" began the commercial counsellor. "You certainly will not talk of matrimony again."

"Why, of course I will talk of matrimony," returned the match-maker in an astonished voice. "Did you ever hear me talk of anything else?"

Papa Miller sighed, and in his wrath put the wrong end of the cigar in his mouth.

"Oh, blast it!" he exclaimed, making a terrible grimace.

The matrimonial agent looked at him in surprise.

"What is the matter with you?" she cried, mortally offended. "Is the subject so disagreeable to you that you express your displeasure in terms that are not permissible in polite conversation?"

"Nonsense!" sputtered the commercial counsellor, endeavoring to get rid of the cigar ashes in his mouth. "Leave me alone. Oh, blast it again!"

"Herr Commercial Counsellor, I must beg of you to be less offensive in your expressions," said the lady, flaring up, at a loss what to think of her companion. "If you no longer wish to accept my

advice and aid, you certainly can intimate it in a manner less offensive to me and more honorable to yourself than by oaths and curses!"

The little man made the most horrible grimaces in his efforts to get the cigar ashes out of his mouth, and finally pulled out his pocket handkerchief and held it to his mouth with the intention of wiping his tongue with it.

"You dare to laugh at me?" asked Madame Baldrian, highly offended.

"Nonsense!" sputtered the commercial counsellor behind his handkerchief, putting the index-finger of his right hand into his mouth and examining something very cautiously.

"I have the honor to bid you adieu!" cried the lady with offended dignity, preparing to leave; "I am not accustomed to such treatment, least of all am I inclined to accept it from one to whom I have rendered such important services. Fare you well. Since you reject my aid, I'll go. I am not disposed to force myself upon you or anyone else."

The commercial counsellor attempted to reply but only sputtered the more, and at last discovered something in his mouth, which seemed to cause him great discomfort and anxiety.

"Nonsense, I tell you!" he mumbled once more, making queer manœuvres with his lips. "That is not the question at all."

"Then what is the matter?" asked Madame Baldrian, once more turning back.

"A blister," muttered the little man, pointing with his finger to the injured spot and attempting to speak at the same time.

The apostle of matrimony became pale with wrath.

"Herr Commercial Counsellor," she cried, unable to move a limb.

"Come here, please, and see whether it is a large one," imperfectly articulated the little round man, putting out his tongue as far as he could.

"Oh, horrors!" she exclaimed, her countenance becoming overcast with redness.

"Heavens, you shouldn't act so," cried the commercial counsellor. "You might do me the favor of pricking it open with a pin right away."

The lady was at a loss what to say or do.

"Do come," begged little Miller again. "It must be quite a large one. Fortunately at the time I put the wrong end of the cigar into my mouth there was a good deal of ashes on it, otherwise I would have done myself still greater injury."

The expressions of anger and excitement quickly vanished from Madame Baldrian's face and those of serenity and embarrassment appeared instead.

"Well, come here, you careless man, you," said she, examining his tongue, and then puncturing it with a pin. "Why did you not express yourself more distinctly?"

"Why didn't you comprehend me?" growled the little man, carefully moving his tongue, and pronouncing the words queerly. "I can't smoke any more now," he added, throwing away his cigar. "Go on with your old topic. Since my daughter's marriage is as good as settled, I can't think whose you want to talk about now, unless it is your own."

"Oh, go away with your foolishness," said Madame Baldrian, coquettishly repelling him. "I want to talk to you about the marriage of your daughter, to be sure."

"Don't jest, my dear madam," returned the commercial counsellor. "That affair, as I said, is as good as disposed of, and nothing more can be said about it for the present."

"You don't understand me," cried the matchmaker, impatiently, as both commenced to walk up and down again. "I am now talking of your other daughter, little Wanda!"

The commercial counsellor's face looked as if he had burned his tongue a second time.

"What is that you say? Wanda too?" he cried, with an expression of the utmost surprise.

"Why, of course," rejoined the matrimonial agent. "I see no reason whatever why Wanda should not marry as well as her sister. I have a young man for her already!" she added, with a self-satisfied smile.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed little Miller, pressing his hands over his full, round paunch.

"A very nice gentleman!" observed the matchmaker, nodding pleasantly.

"Indeed!" ejaculated the little man, staring in blank astonishment.

"But, before I tell you any particulars, it will be necessary to enter into a little calculation," said Madame Baldrian. "You give each of your daughters one hundred thousand dollars, do you not?"

"Excuse me, eighty thousand!" Papa Miller said, correcting her forthwith. "I told you so recently, plainly enough."

"H'm, h'm!" ejaculated the apostle of matrimony, shaking her head, as if displeased with herself. "And I promised Herrn von Collin one hundred thousand. My head is so full of figures that I sometimes make a mistake. Are you sure you said eighty thousand?" she added, directing a penetrating look upon the commercial counsellor.

"Well, I think I ought to know what I said!" growled the commercial counsellor. "And I think that that is quite a respectable sum!"

Madame Baldrian lapsed into thought for a little while.

"You might add twenty thousand to that amount," said she, coaxingly, to little Papa Miller.

"No," he replied, determinedly. "I abide by what I said!"

"Then I will have to bid him down the twenty thousand," she murmured, somewhat depressed. "I'll see him soon, and try to make him listen to reason."

"Do so, my dear madame," said the commercial counsellor. "Never encourage any illusions or grand expectations—that's my doctrine."

"You'll see him soon," resumed the matrimonial agent; "he is coming here."

Little Miller looked astonished.

"I'll see him? He is coming here?" he repeated. "Why that is contrary to our understanding! How can you bring a young man to my house that I know nothing of, one of whom you are now speaking to me for the first time? The young man will actually think that I want to dispose of my daughter at auction!"

Madame Baldrian smilingly motioned with her hand.

"Heavens, don't get so excited!" said she, "seeing one costs nothing and compromises no one. There will be no public reception. I have arranged it so that there will be nothing unusual about it. Herr von Collin happens to be in the vicinity on official business, and I have asked him to call for me here and take me back to Berlin. I should think that no one could find fault with that."

The commercial counsellor gazed upon the matchmaker in wonderment.

"And all this you do gratis," he cried; "from

mere love of your calling! What a noble service you render your fellow-men!"

They had just reached the end of the vine-covered walk, and were about to turn back, when they saw a servant coming toward them.

"What is up, Frederick?" inquired the commercial counsellor.

"There is a gentleman who wishes to see Madame Baldrian," replied the servant.

"Ah!" whispered the matrimonial plotter, "that is our candidate?"

"Thunder!" exclaimed little Miller, frightened.

"Request him to come in," whispered Madame Baldrian to her companion.

"Conduct the gentleman into the garden, Frederick," said the little man to his servant.

The latter withdrew.

"I disclaim all connection with this affair, madame," said the commercial counsellor, addressing the matrimonial agent. "I will have nothing to do with it. The d—l take it all. My children are actually torn from my house by main force, and, in addition to that, I am asked to give more money than I intended!"

"But you receive so few visitors, and you take your daughters so little into society," said Madame Baldrian, "that it is impossible for them to become acquainted with gentlemen! Do you want your daughters to degenerate into old maids? Girls are destined for love and matrimony, and you ought to let them indulge in the pleasures thereof as early and as long as possible."

"Well, for my part," rejoined the kindly little man, whom the agent easily managed. "Don't make any more mistakes in the figures."

"No, no!" answered the match-maker. "One hundred thousand you said?"

"Eighty thousand!" cried the commercial counsellor wrathfully.

"Then I'll have to rectify the little error," observed Madame Baldrian.

"The little error!" cried the little, round papa, still more wrathfully. "One can easily see that you don't have to pay the money."

Just then a young gentleman appeared at the farther end of the long walk.

"Thunder and lightning, there he is already!" exclaimed the little man, quickly looking around to see whether he was not near some passage. But perceiving none he resolved to run as rapidly as his short, stumpy legs would carry him toward the thickly covered vine fence.

He succeeded well enough in getting his head through, but his legs and arms became so entangled in the branches and bushes that trelissed on both sides of the fence, that it became totally impossible for him to advance or retreat.

Madame Baldrian, like a resolute woman, who had a remedy for any and every emergency, quickly grasped her confederate by the legs and thrust them through the fence, enabling the little man to emerge on the other side.

"Much obliged!" groaned the little commercial councillor in a low voice.

"Not at all!" replied the ready-witted woman.

And then, as if nothing had happened, she walked with the most affable mien toward her matrimonial candidate, who apparently had seen nothing of what had just taken place, and who leisurely sauntered down the walk, slowly examining every tree as if he intended to tax them to their full value.

"Ah, here you are, my dear Herr von Collin," said Madame Baldrian, when she had approached to within a few steps of him.

The government solicitor bowed to her in a serio-pleasant manner, as if she was the owner of an estate which he wanted to purchase.

"Punctuality is the first consideration in all business matters," said the gentleman. "Will I be able to see the young lady soon?" he added, quickly.

Madame Baldrian nodded.

"Yes, you will see her," she answered hesitatingly, and slightly embarrassed; "but before that I must make a little confession to you."

"Oh!" exclaimed the solicitor. "She is not married already, is she?"

The matrimonial agent shook her head.

"Nor a widow?" asked the barrister further.

The apostle of matrimony shook her head again.

Herr von Collin's face assumed a puzzled expression.

"She squints, perhaps?" said he, in a low voice.

The match-maker shook her head once more.

"Or is slightly deformed?"

The hymeneal plotter shook her head.

"Or has red hair?"

"Nothing of the sort, my dear friend," began Madame Baldrian. "The young lady possesses all the physical and mental attributes that can render a man happy, but it is a question of money—of the amount of dowery which her father will give her."

"Ah!" ejaculated the solicitor. "Is it going to be larger than the sum you mentioned? That will not prevent me from consummating the *partie*."

Madame Baldrian was obliged to smile in spite of herself.

"Quite the contrary," she replied. "I spoke to you of one hundred thousand dollars, but it is only eighty thousand."

"Oh!" uttered the barrister.

"I am sorry," went on the lady; "I must have

misunderstood the old gentleman, but the twenty thousand dollars cannot possibly weigh so heavily in your scales. You will get into an amiable and most respectable family, the young lady is so lovely, so talented, so charming——"

The government solicitor von Collin did not permit his patroness to finish. He bowed coolly, raised his hat, and turned on his heel to go.

The match-maker looked at him in astonishment.

"Where are you going, if I may ask?" she inquired.

"Why, I am going back whence I came," replied the solicitor.

"Going back whence you came?"—repeated the lady.

"Yes, certainly," said the barrister. "But you mustn't think that I am angry with you. You say you did not hear correctly; that is likely to happen. You spoke to me of a young lady with one hundred thousand dollars, and I showed you my readiness to enter into the affair by appearing promptly at our rendezvous. Now, however, you tell me that she has only eighty thousand, which is below the figure I fixed upon, so I see nothing more for me to do but to go away."

Madame Baldrian looked at her client in amazement.

"Are you really in earnest?" said she. "The dower, it is true, has been reduced by twenty thousand dollars, but the young lady is just the same as she was, and in her you must expect to find the main guarantee of your future happiness."

"Yes, but that would be a marriage of affection," returned Herr von Collin. "I thought you did not believe in that article."

"And why not?" inquired the lady, slightly offended.

"Then you should have told me that before," answered the young man, in a voice of mild reproach. "Do you not know my theory upon this point, hey?"

"No. What is your theory?" asked the matchmaker.

"I can very well conceive," returned solicitor von Collin, "that a young man, under the influence of an irresistible passion, will sacrifice money, ambition, everything, and marry a poor girl with whom he is madly in love; but what I cannot conceive is, how a poor girl can engender love at all."

"Is one always able to control his feelings?" asked Madame Baldrian. "Can one always restrain the promptings of his heart?"

"Why, of course," cried the young man, with the utmost assurance. "It is only a matter of a firm and unalterable will."

"Then you had better confess at once that you have no heart," said Madame Baldrian.

"Excuse me," quickly replied the barrister. "I have a great deal of heart, but I have still more sense."

The conversation seemed to affect and excite the matrimonial agent very much, for her cheeks became flushed, and she turned to the solicitor with nervous impatience.

"You are an unbearable man!" she cried, and, assuming a tone and mien of an examiner, continued: "Listen to me for a moment. Suppose you saw a girl at a ball who charmed you at first sight. Can you imagine such an event?"

"Oh, yes!" replied the barrister.

"Very well!" continued Madame Baldrian, "what would you do in that case?"

"What I have done under similar circumstances before," returned Herr von Collin. "First, I would

ascertain the social position of the young lady, her present and prospective fortune, and, if they did not come up to my expectations, I would run away from her as rapidly as I would go to her in the contrary case."

"You are inhuman?" exclaimed the matrimonial agent.

"Excuse me!" replied the barrister, smiling. "You must not, however, think," he added quickly, with some animation, "that I would marry a girl I did not like merely for her money. I would not do that under any circumstances. I have long ago resolved to act in accordance with that noble principle."

"Praise be to God!" said Madame Baldrian. "I was beginning to despair of you."

The solicitor smiled.

"But since a beautiful and rich girl will certainly make one happier than one that is beautiful and poor," continued the barrister, "I only seek one of the former kind, and flee the latter with all my strength. I have, therefore, the honor once more to bid you adieu, my dear Madame Baldrian!"

The matrimonial agent angrily bit her lips.

"Then you do not even wish to see Fräulein Miller?" she asked.

"I most gratefully decline that pleasure," returned the government solicitor, gracefully taking off his hat to the lady. "If she is really as charming as you have pictured her to be, it will only be a cause of great regret to me, which I prefer to avoid. I have already told you that I have a great deal of heart, but I must not listen to its voice, for if I did, I'd suffer for it very much. Adieu, my dear friend! Perhaps you will be more fortunate with me some other time!"

He turned about and walked away, taking the

first passage through the garden leading toward the gateway, followed by his would-be benefactress, who was ready to leave a battle-field upon which she seemed destined to win no crown of laurels today.

As she was walking along the clean pathway silently, with downcast eyes, which was quite unusual for her, she suddenly heard some one say, lowly, "P'st!"

She looked up and beheld von Collin standing a few paces away from her, actively gesticulating to her to approach him.

"What is the matter?" asked Madame Baldrian, coming close to him.

"Don't talk so loud!" he whispered. "Who is that?"

He pointed to a young lady who was busily engaged in watering the flowers of a beautifully laid out plot in the garden.

"That young lady?" asked the matrimonial agent.

The government solicitor nodded his head.

"Fräulein Wanda Miller!"

"The one you had intended for me?" asked Herr von Collin, in return.

"Yes!"

Her von Collin stared unaffected upon the charming girl, who walked from flower to flower, watering them, and Madame Baldrian regarded her matrimonial candidate with a stealthy but triumphant look.

Just then Wanda disappeared behind a bush which completely shut her from sight.

Herr von Collin heaved a deep sigh.

"Nonsense, man!" said the matrimonial agent, with slight irony in her tones; "you have no use for her! Girls who only have eighty thousand dollars can have no interest for you!"

The solicitor sighed again.

But, after a few moments of inward struggle, he apparently succeeded in mastering his growing weakness, for he smiled as before, and, with affected nonchalance, said:

"'Tis a pity! But I will run away from her even more quickly than from any I have seen before!"

He saluted Madame Baldrian once more, and then disappeared behind a cluster of blooming shrubberies.

Vexed and disappointed a second time, Madame Baldrian dropped her head upon her breast, and slowly walked toward the house.

But, on turning the corner, she perceived the government solicitor standing still and gazing at the bush behind which the young lady had disappeared.

"Why, I thought you had run away?" cried the match-maker. "What are you doing here? Are you fond of looking at oleander-bushes?"

The barrister started as if slightly frightened, and sharply gazed at Madame Baldrian.

"Really, I never saw such a beautiful creature!" he said.

A blaze of victory flashed into the eyes of the matrimonial agent.

"Do you really think old Miller will not add the twenty thousand dollars?" asked he, after a short pause.

"I am positive that he will not do it, under any circumstances," replied the lady; "he is more likely to deduct some more."

The solicitor quickly formed a resolution.

"Very well!" said he, coldly. "Let us talk no more about it. Adieu, Madame Baldrian!"

He then started down the walk toward the street leading past the house.

Almost at the same moment the little commercial counsellor appeared from an opposite direction, limping and sneaking, like a detective.

As soon as Madame Baldrian saw Herr Miller, she remembered the need of maintaining the part she was playing toward him, and therefore called out loudly :

"Don't be in such a hurry, Herr von Collin. Will you not take me with you?"

The young man stopped and looked around, and took in the situation at a glance when he beheld the little round man, who was still rubbing one of his knees. He pleasantly, but unconcernedly, greeted him, and waited for the lady, who had stopped to say adieu to the master of the house, and both disappeared soon afterward behind a projecting angle of the house, the matrimonial agent leaning upon the arm of her candidate.

Little Miller followed the pair with his eyes as far as he could see them, and, while still rubbing his injured knee, muttered to himself :

"Thank God he is gone. He will sing a different tune now! The reduction I made has cooled him somewhat. Two at one time is rather too much for me! Everything must go on in proper order. It seems to me I have seen this young man somewhere. Exactly! at the Frohbergs'. But that's immaterial. I thank my Creator that I am rid of him. I almost broke a leg on his account!

He then limped away toward the house, with the intention of resting himself a little in his comfortable easy-chair. But on reaching the door he heard a carriage approaching, and he remained standing stock-still.

"Is that another visitor for me?" murmured the little commercial counsellor to himself, slipping behind some bushes, intending from that safe spot

to ascertain who the new-comers were. "Upon my word!" continued he, in his monologue; "'The longer the day the finer the callers,' as the saying is. That is my old friend the privy counsellor, Dr. Staberow, as I live. But he has two ladies with him, and I certainly can't show myself in my present condition. I must get to my room somehow and change my clothes. Frederick will show them into the parlor, though, and ask them to wait. He is aware that I am in the garden. The good doctor does not often show himself, now that he is married. Formerly he used to call quite often, though he always was very busy. Yes, yes, newly married folks have something more pleasant to do than to visit old acquaintances."

It was, in fact, privy counsellor Dr. Staberow, who had just arrived and was passing up the walk toward the house with an elegantly dressed lady upon each arm. The poor doctor walked, or rather limped, along in the most peculiar manner, bringing down his feet upon the ground as if a lot of raw eggs were strewn in his path.

After the doctor and the ladies had disappeared in the vestibule of the house the little commercial counsellor ventured from behind the shrubbery and cautiously crawled into the house by the back door.

When he reached the parlor, about ten minutes later, he found the privy counsellor in a remarkable attitude.

He was leaning back in the most comfortable easy-chair; his eyes were shut and both knees were grasped in his locked hands, with his organs of locomotion suspended in the air.

The commercial counsellor was startled at beholding this sight, all the more so as the doctor did not change his position when he entered.

At last the privy counsellor opened his eyes,

jumped to his feet regardless of the agony it caused him to do so, as was shown by the painful face he made when they touched the floor, and nodded to little Miller in a friendly but doleful manner.

"What, are you alone, my dear doctor?" asked the commercial counsellor. "I thought I saw you accompanied by two ladies."

"You are right," returned the privy counsellor drawing up his right leg. "That was my wife and my mother-in-law, whom I wished to introduce to you and your wife. Thunder and lightning!"

The commercial counsellor bowed in acknowledgment of the honor, and then looked very much surprised.

"Where are your ladies?" he asked, looking about the room.

"Fräulein Wanda informed us that your wife is not very well," replied the privy counsellor, drawing up his left leg, "and so my wife and my mother-in-law—thunder and lightning!—have gone to see her in her room."

Little Miller looked at the doctor, greatly astonished.

"A long while since I had the pleasure, my dear doctor," he began, blinking pleasantly with his little eyes. "But during the early months of matrimonial life old friends are forgotten."

The privy counsellor made a movement as if he would like to take his left foot in his right hand.

"Pardon me, my dear Miller!" he said; "I would have called sooner, for the purpose of introducing to you my wife and my mother-in-law—thunder and lightning!—but I hadn't a moment's time."

"Oh!" uttered the commercial counsellor. "During the happiest period of your life you might have taken more time for enjoyment. How can one visit patients during his honeymoon?"

The privy counsellor shook his right foot as if he would cast it from his body.

"I didn't visit any patients! I was away travelling in Italy!" he exclaimed, in painful tones. "My wife and my mother-in-law—thunder and lightning!—suddenly got a hankering to climb Mount Vesuvius, and of course I had to go with them. Holy heaven! thunder and lightning!"

Little Miller retreated a step, frightened.

"Why, my dear friend, where did you acquire the detestable habit of cursing so?" he asked, looking at the doctor with big eyes. "Did you suffer so much provocation in Italy as to make you swear?"

"No," cried the doctor, throwing himself into the easy-chair again and drawing up his legs in the air. "I have ruined my feet in climbing Vesuvius, and now I have to wear these torturing tight patent-leather boots which my mother-in-law has had made for me. It is enough to drive one out of his wits!"

And then he shook his legs as if he would shake the boots off his feet.

The commercial counsellor smiled.

"What ails your wife?" began Dr. Staberow, from force of habit, despite his pains. "Caught a cold, hey? Nothing serious, I hope."

"I don't know about that," replied the little commercial counsellor. "It is very strange; my wife was always as well as a fish in the water, but since our sea-baths at Ostend she is a completely changed woman. The North Sea does not seem to have agreed with her; she is constantly indisposed and I am at a loss what to make of it."

"It may be due to the weather," observed the doctor, closing his eyes again. "One often meets with such phenomena among the ladies."

"Well, let us change the subject and talk about

yourself a little," suggested the little man. "How do you like matrimonial life?"

"Don't like it at all!" exclaimed the privy counsellor. "And that comes from not being satisfied with the lot a kind heaven gives one. I was formerly very busy, but when I came home I could rest, and with the money I earned I could buy what I chose. Now, however, I have no rest at all, whether in day-time or at night, and, despite my wife's fortune, I am beginning to be short of funds, our expenses being so great. In the end I will have to resume the practice of medicine again. And for all that, my wife and her mother are really very kind persons," he continued, growing more enthusiastic, "who love me very much and want to make life pleasant to me. But what provokes me so is that I can find no fault with them, cannot even get angry at them and vent my temper, which might relieve me somewhat. I am obliged to submit to everything, accept everything with a smile, and kiss the hand that is slowly pushing the stiletto into my heart."

The commercial counsellor was about to express his sympathy with the privy counsellor in his sufferings when the servant entered and reported that the legation counsellor had arrived.

"Request him to come in here!" said Miller to the servant. The privy counsellor painfully got upon his feet again, and a few moments after the legation counsellor, von Frohberg, entered the room.

"Here I am, as you requested, my dear Herr Miller," said the new-comer on entering, shaking hands with the gentlemen present. "How do you feel, my dear Herr Privy Counsellor?"

"I feel bad," returned the latter. "I have the honor to bid you good day, Herr von Frohberg."

"Why, doctor, do you intend to leave directly after I come in? That is very unkind of you!"

"It has nothing at all to do with kindness, my dear friend," groaned the privy counsellor, taking his hat. "If it depended upon me I'd take off my boots and chat with you till evening, but my ladies wait for me, as we have seven more visits to make before dinner. Apropos," he said, turning back after he had gone a few steps toward the door, and addressing himself to the legation counsellor, "I met your brother and his wife in Italy. They will return soon."

"Why soon?" asked von Frohberg, unpleasantly affected by the news.

"The health of your sister-in-law was not very good. The climate did not seem to agree with her very well, and consequently your brother concluded to return soon.

"You really think so?" asked the legation counsellor, evidently greatly alarmed at the report.

"You may depend upon it. In a week at the longest you will have the pleasure of seeing them again," Dr. Staberow assured him.

"They will be just in time," muttered the little commercial counsellor carelessly, but here he checked himself quickly.

"Just in time for what?" asked the privy counsellor.

"Oh, well, I may as well tell you, since it is sure to become known," replied the little man, considerably embarrassed.

Just then Louisa came into the parlor without being seen by any of those present.

The commercial counsellor made a shrewdly mysterious face, puckered up his plump lips, and in a low, confidential voice, said:

"I will soon celebrate the engagement of my daughter Louisa with——"

Here he checked himself and looked around, frightened. Louisa had put her hand upon his shoulder and looked upon him supplicatingly.

"Papa," said she, "you gave me time till this evening to think over the matter, and the day is not yet gone by. Having heard that Herr von Frohberg is here, I came to consult him about a certain matter."

"And I came near doing something very foolish," said Papa Miller, angrily shaking his head. "That shows that I am getting old. Bodily I am wonderfully strong since I took the baths at Ostend, but mentally I fear I am getting weak—becoming forgetful and babbling."

The cloud that overspread the serious countenance of the legation counsellor now gave place to an expression of astonishment, engendered by the news he had just heard.

"Then don't let me interfere," groaned the privy counsellor, who all this time had been resting alternately first on one foot and then on the other. "Come, Herr Miller, I will say 'Good-by' to your wife, and introduce you to my ladies. Seven more visits to make! When I come home I have to put my feet in warm water. Adieu, Herr Legation Counsellor!"

"Adieu, adieu, my dear Staberow!"

"Come and see me once. I have acquired a lot of new friends, to be sure, but my old ones are doubly dear to me. Will you come?"

"Yes, yes!" answered Herr von Frohberg, pressing the hand of the doctor in his.

"You ought to become acquainted with my wife," continued the privy counsellor, again drawing up one leg in the air.

"Certainly," replied von Frohberg.

"And with my mother-in-law!" cried Staberow.

"Thunder and lightning! I can stand it no longer!"

He then flung an arm around the neck of the little commercial counsellor, and, thus supported, he hobbled away to seek his wife and his mother-in-law.

CHAPTER XI.

WANDA PLAYS ON THE PIANO AGAIN.

After commercial counsellor Miller and Dr. Staberow were gone, Louisa seated herself upon the sofa, and the legation counsellor took a seat opposite to her.

"You wish to consult me about something?" began Herr von Frohberg, after a long silence. "Am I better able to advise you than your father?"

"Yes," said she, with downcast eyes. "As father has already given his consent, he is not competent to advise me." Then she added slowly, "I fear you must be angry with me."

"Why should I be angry with you, Louisa?" asked the legation counsellor in return.

"Because I did not inform you ere this of the existence of this project," answered Fräulein Louisa.

"How can I be angry with you on that account? You are mistress of your own affairs, and I least of all have any right to control your actions."

"Nothing that is binding has, in fact, transpired as yet," continued the young lady, "for I wished to consult you first."

The legation counsellor smiled in a peculiar manner.

"Usually girls consult their own hearts in such matters," said he, shrugging his shoulders.

Louisa seemed to be struggling with two internal forces, both being apparently equally strong.

"Tell me candidly," began she, after a pause; "would it displease you at all if I was to get married?"

"Yes, it would be both unpleasant and strange to me at first," returned the legation counsellor. "I have known you as a child, dandled you upon my knees, seen you several times every week, and now I should as good as lose you all at once, be obliged to address you 'my gracious lady,' and be an unwelcome guest in your house, an eyesore to your husband! I must admit that the news at first affected me unpleasantly, but when reason comes to help one against his egotism, he is even pleased with such news."

"Pleased?" repeated Louisa, quickly, a momentary redness overspreading her cheeks.

"Well, yes," substantiated the legation secretary, "for when you marry, it will only be because you will be indubitably happy, and I would be a very poor friend of yours indeed if I am not glad that you are happy."

Louisa sighed, and murmured to herself the word "happy!"

"For you love the man you are about to marry, do you not?" asked von Frohberg, looking his young friend fully in the face.

Her inward struggle seemed to grow more intense.

"No," she exclaimed under the influence of a sudden resolution, quickly rising from the sofa. "No, I do not love him!"

The legation counsellor also got up and seemed to be both astonished and gratified at the same time.

"Ah!" said he. "You do not love him, but you do not dislike him either?"

"No," said Louisa. "He is a man of fine appearance, of dignified and agreeable manners, and he really seems to love me."

The legation counsellor was silent.

"Well?" asked Louisa, after waiting a while. "Tell me your opinion, candidly."

"Very well," returned the legation counsellor. "It is an unquestionable fact that the social condition of our times and our manners have brought about a state of things in which the majority of marriages are affected in precisely the same manner as yours will be. Mothers having marriageable daughters will court young men of questionable tendencies. I say mothers because I know it for a fact, that in most instances it is the mothers who do the courting, their sole object being to marry off their daughters, and they will do everything in their power to attract the young men. If hints and suggestions are not sufficient to induce a young man to propose for the hand of the daughter, the mother straightway begins to court another. Whether he is a man of high principles, exalted sentiments, kind disposition, or the reverse, is totally immaterial, so long as he is wealthy, and if in addition he is a man of fine appearance. To the daughter, too, one young man seems to be just as good as another, provided he is 'well fixed,' and *seems* to really love her."

Louisa blushed and then replied in a low voice, with downcast eyes:

"I have been talked to so much about this matter that I did not know what to do. I declined to listen altogether, at first, but when one is charged upon from all sides, one is apt to give assent merely to get rest."

"You did not permit me to finish what I had to say," added the legation counsellor. "I said the manner in which marriages are brought about now-a-days is due to the customs and social conditions of our times. When a young lady gets to be twenty or twenty-two years old, she seems to be ashamed before her friends because she is not engaged, and she is ready to throw herself into the arms of the first young man that comes along, be his disposition

what it may. The majority of such instances do not cause me the least surprise, but what has been a great surprise to me," added von Frohberg, in a very serious tone of voice, "is that you, Louisa, should make no exception to the general rule."

"Part of my excuse you will find in the words with which I interrupted you," returned the young lady. "I have nothing additionally extenuating to offer, unless it is the circumstance that we lead here a very secluded life, and that my free will, my resolution, have been so constrained, and such convincing arguments have been brought to bear upon me that, at last, I did not know what to do, and I concluded to consult you."

"Before I give you my unbiassed opinion, I must know the name of the gentleman," said the legation counsellor.

"He is not unknown to you," replied Fräulein Louisa.

"He is not unknown to me?" echoed the legation counsellor, mentally casting in review all his acquaintances.

Suddenly, however, a still more important point seemed to occur to him, for he quickly turned to Louisa, and said:

"And who, if I may ask, hampered your free will and resolution so much?"

"Principally Madame Baldrian," replied Louisa.

Herr von Frohberg uttered an exclamation of displeasure, and started to walk up and down the room with hasty strides.

Suddenly the door was opened, and Fredrick announced that Herr Baron von Branco wished to pay his respects to Fräulein Louisa Miller.

"That's he!" whispered Louisa, coming close up to Frohberg.

The latter started visibly, stopped short, and stared at the young lady.

"My God, what ails you?" asked she, in alarm.

"Let him enter," whispered Frohberg, quickly; "and say to him that you have asked me for advice in the matter; that you propose to abide by it, and then make some excuse and leave us two together."

"Request the Herr Baron to enter," said Louisa to the servant, and in a few minutes the visitor entered and bowed very deeply to the young lady, and haughtily to von Frohberg.

"I will inform my father of your arrival, Herr Baron," observed Louisa, turning to the new comer, "and will leave you with my best and most intimate friend, Herr Legation Counsellor von Frohberg. I have informed him of your proposition, and have requested him to advise me about it, which advice I intend to follow to the letter."

She then bowed to the baron in a pleasant manner, and left the room.

The information which Herr von Branco just received did not seem to be very agreeable to him, for he bit his lip, and his face became perceptibly overspread with a frown; but in a few moments he succeeded in regaining full mastery over himself, and with the agreeable smile of a man of the world, he turned to the legation counsellor and said:

"If I understood Fräulein Miller correctly, then my future earthly happiness depends upon you, information which cannot be otherwise than exceedingly agreeable to me, since our engagement is likely to encounter no hindrances from you."

"It is but a few minutes since I ascertained Fräulein Louisa's projected engagement and the name of her intended," returned von Frohberg. "I

must confess that the news caused me as much surprise as annoyance."

The baron seemed to be greatly astonished at this reply.

"What is there about it liable to cause you surprise?" asked he. "Fräulein Miller is in her twentieth year, and at that age young ladies are apt to marry."

The legation counsellor made no reply.

"And as regards myself," went on the baron, "it seems to me that it is none too soon for me to bid farewell to bachelorhood."

The legation counsellor was still silent.

"Evidently these are not the objections which you would offer to our engagement," continued Baron Branco. "I will also tell you that Herr Miller has instituted inquiries concerning me which, I am happy to say, have proved satisfactory to him."

The legation counsellor shrugged his shoulders almost imperceptibly.

"All these, I perceive, would not suffice for you, were you in Herr Miller's place," spoke the baron further, "and you therefore propose to question me still further. Ask me, I pray you, and I will answer you truthfully. Moreover, you have been acquainted with me long enough to know that I am no worse, if no better, than most men. That I have committed several foolish acts I will not deny, but I am done with them now."

"H'm!" uttered the legation counsellor. "And you have no old bond to sever ere you enter into a new one?"

"None whatever!" replied the baron, calmly and firmly.

"Your heart is perfectly free?" asked von Frohberg, further.

"Perfectly!" answered Branco; "and I may

even add," continued he, after a short pause, "that I have never had a sincere attachment. May I now count upon your kind approval?"

The legation counsellor became lost in thought, and the conversation of the two was arrested.

Just then Fredrick entered, holding a letter in his hand.

"What do you want?" asked von Frohberg, aroused by the noise.

"Pardon me, Herr Legation Counsellor," replied the man. "The valet of your brother has just brought this. He says it is from my gracious lady, Madame von Frohberg."

"What! my sister-in-law back in Berlin?" cried the legation secretary, seizing the letter.

"Yes," reported Fredrick. "The valet said that Herr von Frohberg and my gracious lady had arrived about half an hour ago."

"Very well," said the legation counsellor, and without taking any notice of the presence of the baron, he hastily opened the letter.

He no sooner began to read it than his usually pale countenance became suffused with an active flush, and the further he read the more his excitement grew.

"You have deceived me, you have not told me the truth," said he, vehemently, addressing himself to the baron.

"Herr Legation Counsellor!" exclaimed the latter, angrily and offended, falling back a step.

"Perhaps you have deceived yourself," continued the legation counsellor. "You told me that you had no bonds to sever, but that was false. No engagement between you and Fräulein Miller can take place!"

"And why not, if I may ask?" inquired Baron Branco, almost in a threatening tone.

The legation counsellor seemed unable to utter what he wished to say.

"Because you are under certain obligations to my sister-in-law," he exclaimed, with vehemence.

Herr von Branco turned pale.

"What, you are aware of it?" he stammered out.

"Yes, I know everything!" continued Frohberg. "For a certain promise which I gave her, she agreed to leave Berlin; but she credited herself with more strength than she possessed, and she has hastened back in order to prevent this marriage, which she has heard of in some way, even if she has to suffer for it grievously."

Baron Branco wrinkled his brow.

Herr von Frohberg went up close to him, and said, in very serious tones:

"Such an *éclat* would also bring shame upon my brother, and if you did not hesitate to assail his honor, respect at least now his peace of mind."

Herr von Branco compressed his lips tightly.

"The long and short of it, then, is that you oppose this engagement?" he asked, in a dry, unpleasant voice.

"Yes!" returned von Frohberg, bowing coldly.

"And what steps do you intend to take in this matter?" asked Branco, further.

The legation counsellor made no reply.

"Perhaps you intend to inform the commercial counsellor of all the circumstances of the case?"

Herr von Frohberg nodded with his head affirmatively.

The baron reflected for a while.

"You forget that you cannot mention the lady's name," said he. "She has kept her promise and left Berlin; but the fact that she has returned does not release you from your obligation to keep the matter a secret. What do you intend to say of me?

That I have a *liaison?* It is entirely severed. Can you prove the contrary? And even if you could, you dare not do it."

"And why not?" vehemently exclaimed the legation counsellor. "The result will justify the means! I shall show this letter to the commercial counsellor, Miller!"

"Oh, no; you will not do that!" said the baron, in an exasperating tone.

"I can trust to his honor and discretion," added Frohberg, "to keep this matter an inviolable secret, and then he will surely prohibit the engagement."

He then quickly turned away, as if to leave the room.

The baron suddenly became fearfully anxious.

"Stay!" he cried, stretching out his hand as if to detain his opponent.

The legation counsellor stopped and turned around.

"I withdraw my proposition," said the baron. "I voluntarily renounce all claim to the hand of Fräulein Miller."

"Very well!" said Frohberg. "Then we have nothing more to do with each other."

"I am sorry I must contradict you on this point," returned Herr von Branco. "You have driven me from this house, and you will give me satisfaction for that."

"Ah!" uttered the legation counsellor. "*You* talk of getting satisfaction? *You* intend to challenge me? That is extraordinary indeed. But I will not fight with you, not now at least."

"And why not?" asked Branco, with marked scorn.

"Because my sister-in-law will not have it," answered the legation counsellor.

"The sister-in-law again!" mocked the baron. "Are you the slave of your sister-in-law?"

"Yes, Herr Branco," said Frohberg, "You have employed the correct expression. I am certainly now the slave of my sister-in-law, but I will not be so long, and therefore I must ask for the postponement of our affair for a while. You can believe me when I tell you that I would much prefer to settle my account with you now, and that it is very hard for me to wait," he added, with a threatening look.

Baron Branco bowed coldly.

"Very well, Herr Legation Counsellor," said he, ironically; "I will wait, but I hope you will not tax my patience too much."

He bowed once more to his opponent, and then left the room.

Left alone, the legation counsellor became lost in thought, and began to walk up and down the parlor, as was his habit.

The otherwise calm and sensible man had allowed himself to become inveigled into an affair which his soul condemned, but which he was obliged to bear.

The door was now slightly opened, and in the opening appeared the bald, fatty, round, and glossy head of the commercial counsellor, behind which the tall figure of Louisa was seen.

When little Miller saw that the legation counsellor was alone, his face assumed an expression of the utmost surprise; he came nearer to him, and asked:

"Is the baron gone?"

"Yes!" returned Frohberg, "never again to cross this threshold. The baron's engagement to Louisa is an impossibility."

An expression of joy and satisfaction was delineated upon the beautiful face of Louisa.

"Oh, how happy I am!" she cried, throwing her arms around her father's neck.

"You are choking me, my angel!" gasped the little, round papa, releasing himself from his daughter's loving embrace.

After that he rubbed his fat and plump hands in the utmost satisfaction, and muttered to himself:

"I am not at all sorry for it, my child, for, anxious as I am to see you married, still I would unwillingly part with you and hand you over to an uncertain future. Now we will remain at least for a while longer together. But the affair looks very strange to me," he observed, turning to the legation counsellor with a much surprised mien. "Tell me what occurred between you two. You must have found out some new fact, or else something unusual must have transpired between you two."

The legation counsellor approached little Miller very closely, and whispered to him:

"You shall know everything, but not now; when we are alone."

The little commercial counsellor opened his plump, voluptuous lips slightly, and gazed upon his friend in still greater astonishment.

Herr von Frohberg winked at him with his eyes to be silent, and little Miller was therefore compelled to subdue his curiosity for the time being.

In order, however, not to suffer the agony of delay very long, Commercial Counsellor Miller resorted to a shrewd little diplomatic trick. Smiling serenely and in the most off-hand manner, he said:

"Let us go into the garden, children, for a while. It is fearfully hot and close here in the house. I feel very uncomfortable here."

He then turned to go, in the hope of being followed by Frohberg, whom he intended to draw aside and learn from him what had happened between him and the baron.

Papa Miller had just reached the door, when it was suddenly opened and Wanda rushed in and embraced her father with so much vehemence that he came near losing his equilibrium.

"Wanda!" groaned the little man, when he was able to utter between the kisses which his youngest daughter showered upon him. "Wanda, what in the world is the matter with you? Have you resolved to throttle me to-day? First one chokes me almost to death, and then the other."

"Oh, don't be angry with me, papa," said Wanda, releasing him, "I thought you were Louisa. I mistook you for her in my haste."

"No, I am not Louisa by any means," returned the commercial counsellor, surprised; "this is the first time in my life, in fact, that I was mistaken for her. There is your sister, over there," he added, pointing with his finger to his eldest daughter.

"Well, Louisa?" exclaimed Wanda, rushing away like a cyclone toward her sister, and falling upon her neck and showering kisses upon her as she did upon her father a little while ago. "Well, Louisa, is everything arranged? Did you consent? When will the wedding take place?"

"Wanda, let me go! Are you out of your senses to-day?" cried her elder sister, in an unusually joyous manner.

"Yes, I am almost out of my senses for joy, when I see you are so happy," exclaimed the young lady. "Well, when will the wedding take place? Out with it, quick!"

"Thank heaven, I shall not marry that gentleman!" said Louisa, happily.

Wanda looked at her sister with large, but still incredulous eyes.

"Is that true, papa?" said she, addressing herself to her father.

The commercial counsellor nodded his head.

"Well, then, we will begin again!" cried Wanda, suddenly, flaring up in anger, and in the next minute she darted away to the piano and began to drum her favorite polka with so much vehemence and discord that the walls fairly trembled, and the commercial counsellor first drew up one leg in the air, then the other, and lastly clapped his hands over his ears, and finding that that was insufficient, he ran away like one bereft of reason, while the legation counsellor followed the smiling Louisa into the adjoining room.

CHAPTER XII.

COLD PAN-CAKES AND A HOT LIFE.

After Major Rumpel, with the fat Augusta had driven away for the purpose of executing a distress marriage contract, because he believed that he and Augusta had been poisoned by Madame Baldrian, as the reader will remember, the toothache-afflicted Rarrer, who had become stupefied by the chloroform, found himself locked in the Major's apartment. The hasty slamming to of the door had aroused him from his stupor, and when he pulled off the cloth from his face, which the major had thrown over the supposed corpse, he found himself alone and locked in, and finally he reached the window just in time to see the major and Augusta drive away in a droschk.

But when, to his horror, he found that he was not heard, he dropped back into his chair with sad resignation, and began to reflect how long one can live without any nutriment.

We find the unhappy Rarrer still busily engaged with these thoughts.

After recovering from the first consternation which his peculiar position engendered in him, his mind began to clear up once more, and the sharp logic of reflection, for which he was so well known, reproduced the unfortunate chain of accidents which he had experienced that day.

Why must he have a toothache? Merely because Privy Counsellor Dr. Staberow asked him whether he was suffering from that illness? That would be contrary to all sense, contrary to nature, contrary to science!

But that is just the reason why it could only happen to him.

He was, in fact, an exception to all divine and human arrangement.

After he had suffered agonizing torture for several days, after he had passed several sleepless nights, after famishing all these days and nights, having been able to take only a little broth occasionally, he had at last heroically resolved to have the painful tooth extracted.

Why must Major Rumpel meet him just as he was on the way to his dentist, and have no time to carry a notice to the employment bureau?

Why must his accommodativeness, which never brought anyone good luck, induce him, on this day of all others, to relieve the major of a task and perform a commission for him?

Why must the dentist pull out a wrong tooth for him?

Why must his conscientiousness, despite his terrible pains, drive him to Major Rumpel again for the purpose of reporting the favorable result of his commission?

Why did all these events happen?

Only to cause him more and greater embarrassments!

How did it happen that he fell asleep at all, after the toothache had disappeared from using the remedy which Madame Baldrian had given him?

Ah! most probably because of the great exhaustion after suffering so many days, after the many nights that he had passed without refreshing slumber.

But why did the major throw a cloth over his face?

Flies there were none, for it was already late in the autumn and a cold north wind carried the fallen

leaves with a rustling sound over the dusty promenade along the canal.

His eye wandered about the room.

Ah! there was one fly still to be seen, but it seemed to be very tired already, for its podagrical feet moved very slowly and with great uncertainty upon the window pane.

A happy smile overspread Rarrer's pale countenance.

"The majoh is weally a good man," he mentally said, "to be so thoughtful when theah was only one pooh disabled fly! That's weally a fine twait of chawactah in him!"

But a few minutes later a cloud of grief and anxiety overspread his countenance.

Why did the major leave him alone? Why did he drive away with his housekeeper, something, in fact, which Rarrer's bashful nature deemed altogether unseemly?

He might at least have left the key upon the table, or thrown it back into the room over the transom, but to make a prisoner of him, perhaps for a very long time, that was altogether thoughtless, not to say cruel, to one who had been so obliging to him.

But that is the way of mankind! Ingratitude is the reward of the world!

Rarrer sat a long while totally collapsed in his chair, when suddenly his face assumed a very painful expression, and he passed a hand over the region of his stomach.

"I am hungwy!" he groaned, lowly. "And why should I not be hungwy?" he added, after a little while. "Duwing the last two days I have had nothing but two bowls of oat-meal gwuel, and now that my toothache is gone my appetite begins to tohchu me!"

Rarrer allowed his head to sink upon his breast, he pressed with both hands upon his stomach, and uttered a low moan.

Then he began to rock his body to and fro, like the bears in the Zoological Garden when the pangs of hunger have made them restless, and finally he leaped to his feet, ran about the room several times, and, provoked by an inward spasmodic wrath, with which he was not unusually affected, cried:

"I can stand this no longah! I have had nothing to-day but a cup of coffee, which, as evewy one knows contains no nowishment. It is alweady gwowing dahk, and the majoh and his housekeepah ahe not coming yet. Heavens, what if they stay away all night, too; oah, ahe gone on some pleasah twip—which, at this time of the yeah, I'd considah a cwazy notion, then I will pevish from hungah heah, and not even a woosteh will cwow oveh it."

Suddenly, however, he stopped, crossed his arms over his breast, and his countenance assumed a beatific expression of resignation.

"And would it be such a gweat misfovtune if I weah to pevish from hungah, and theahby escape futuh twoubles?" he began, in gloomy tones. "At fivst, dying by hungah is, it is twue, painful, just as I suffah now; soon, howevah, a blissful ecstasy comes ovah the dying pehson, he imagines himself to be in celestial halls, he sips nectah, and feasts on ambwosia. Did not Ugolino, with his sons, die of hungah? I wead it in Gweisenbehg. How good he felt at last, what noble and elevating convevsation they kept up between them befoah death, in the shape of a bwight angel, closed theah eyes! I will wap myself in the gwaveyahd philosophy of the melancholic Dane," he continued, after a brief pause; "whenevah I see that piece played I always feel as if I want to die too. And would not death be a

benefit to me? 'Of what use is it foh cweatuhes like me to cwawel about between heaven and earth?' Let us then wap ouhselves in the necessavy wesolution and dignity, twanspoht ouhselves into heavenly dweams, and gwadually and delightfully twansfer ouhselves into a bettah and a moah wighteous life."

After uttering these obituary remarks to himself, Rarrer walked with pathetic stage steps to the place he had previously occupied, cautiously and dignifiedly dropped into the seat again, assumed an artistically negligent posture, and closed his eyes, under the supposition that he would never open them again.

In this position he remained for a good half hour.

At first his respirations were deep and heavy; after a while his breast rattled a little, and finally a heavy sigh escaped from him.

After that everything was as silent as death.

It was doubtless the last sigh that bore his released soul into the celestial regions on high. Peace to his ashes!

As the clock upon the escritoire of the major began to strike, with its harsh, shrill tones, a tremor ran through the body that was once Rarrer's. Is it likely that a little spark of life had actually remained in it?

Immediately thereafter his legs stretched themselves out, the shoulders were raised up a little, and the head rolled over to the other side.

Then the lips parted slightly—at first as if they would only allow the breath of life to slip through, but gradually they separated more and more.

In a tired person this act would have been considered a hearty, powerful yawn; in one who is dying it would have, perhaps, been looked upon as the last spasmodic flicker of expiring life.

After the mouth had closed itself, the lips began to move again quietly and slowly, and, had an attentive ear been in the room, it would soon have heard the following words pronounced at low breath:

"Ah! I have ovehcome my suffeving! I pictuhed to myself stawation to be much wohse than it weally is! I am now in heaven, and all my eathly tohtuahes ahe behind me!"

But suddenly a shudder ran through Rarrer's frame.

"Oh, oh!" he murmured again. "Weally, I always supposed it was much wahmeh in heaven. I feel as if I was fweezing, and my body is icy cold. But then I have no body at all now. I am an angel, thehfoah I must be mistaken. I am not yet accustomed to the climate, that's all. I'll feel all wight soon!"

But it was not long before the upper part of Rarrer's body raised itself from its reclining posture, both hands forcibly compressed his stomach, the knees were drawn up spasmodically against the abdomen, and the eyes, that were closed till now, were forcibly opened, and he stared with constantly increasing horror.

"Ah!" cried the unfortunate youth at last, on recognizing his surroundings by the flickering light of a gas-lamp on the sidewalk. "What is this? Why I am still in Majoh Wumpel's woom! And I thought I had ovehcome all my twoubles and was in heaven! Unfohtunate man that I am! I was only stupefied from exhaustion foh a time, and now the tohtuahes of hungeh commence anew! No!" he exclaimed, jumping up and running about the room like mad; "no amount of gwave-yahd philosophy is pwoof against such tohtuahes as I am now suffewing! If I do not succeed vewy soon in getting out of this wetched situation, I'll suhley pevish!"

Rarrer stopped and looked out into the street.

A cold November wind was whistling through the streets; the light in the gas-lamp flickered and flared, throwing an uncertain spectral shadow upon the surrounding objects, and the clothes of the persons who passed by were blown ahead of them, as if the wind desired to study the plastic art on the reverse side of the living statues.

Rarrer seemed to be greatly interested in this simple side-show, for his pale, weak face, lit up by the gaslight, resembling that of a spectre, became more and more animated, as if he was mentally planning a scheme whereby he would be able to save himself.

"If a small boy should pass by, I'll get him to bwing me something to eat, oh wepoht me to the watchman!" he murmured to himself.

He then opened the window and leaned out, so as to be able to call the expected messenger.

An errand-boy soon came clattering along on the other side of the street, whistling loudly the Düppel March.

"Hey!" exclaimed Rarrer, "hey, boy!"

The boy looked at him for a moment, began to whistle still louder, and walked along leisurely without taking any further notice of him, while a gentleman who happened to pass by beneath him looked up and laughed.

Rarrer began to reflect why the gentleman laughed at him.

A few minutes later a little girl came along, her cheeks blue from the cold, and her hands tucked away under a little shawl.

"Hey, little one, look up heah!" cried Rarrer.

The little one looked up for a moment, and then ran away; but a jovial young gentleman who came by, lustily called out to him:

"Shut the window, boy! Shut the window! You'll catch cold!"

Rarrer thought for a moment, and then blushed so actively that it could almost be seen in the dark.

"Oh! this is tewible!" he cried, pulling down the window slowly.

But Hunger is a terrible master, that submits neither to impertinence nor to delay.

The shrill tunes of the Düppel March again fell upon Rarrer's ears, and seemed to come nearer and nearer.

The unfortunate young man opened the window again, cautiously, leaned out as far as he deemed prudent, and as soon as the errand-boy approached near enough, he took courage and called out loudly:

"Hey, boy!"

The boy stopped whistling, stretched out his neck in the direction whence the sound came, and being unable to see any one, he was just about to proceed on his way, when Rarrer called to him again, louder than before:

"Hey, boy!"

"What yer want?" asked the boy.

"Come heah, neah the window, and I'll give you something."

These words always have a good effect in Berlin.

The boy first carefully looked around to see that no trick was intended to be played upon him, and then approached the window and cautiously glanced at the person whose body he could now see distinctly by the light of the gas-lamp, and then quite agreeably and inquisitively asked:

"What yer want me to do?"

"Can't you get me some cwackahs and cheese, oh cold woast beef and wwy bwead?" asked he, leaning out as far as he dared, with the intention of

dropping the necessary amount of money close to where the boy stood.

The boy thought a moment, and then with the impertinence peculiar to the Berlin gamin, burst out into a long guffaw and retorted in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the street, mimicking Rarrer's way of pronouncing the words:

"'Cwackahs and cheese or cold woast beef and wwy bwead!' My jolly bird! Get them yerself, why don't cher!" and without waiting he started off at a brisk walk, leaving poor Rarrer in an almost disconsolate condition.

"'Of what use is it for cweatuhs like me to cwawl about between heaven and earth?'" murmured he to himself after a while. "This dying of hungah after all is not as poetical as Gweisenbehg descweibes it in his Ugolino," added he, after another pause. "I can't beah it any longah. I must get something to eat, oh I will pevish. I shouldn't have asked that boy to bwing me things whose names contain that unfortunate lettah. I will twy again,"

He leaned out of the window and glanced up and down the quiet street, but not a soul was to be seen, for after dark the streets on the outskirts of the city having no direct connection with any thoroughfare are totally deserted.

From looking out so much into the darkness Rarrer's eyes were enabled to detect objects a good ways off, and in that way a new thought sprung up in his mind.

"I'll get out thwough the window," said he to himself, joyfully. "It is not vevy high, and as the stweet is unfwequented no one is likely to see me. I'll thus get out of my pwison and wush away to the neawest westuwant and eat a heahty dinnah."

He then opened the window as far as he could,

grasped the sill with his right hand and stuck his left leg outside.

Suddenly he thought he heard a peculiar noise behind him, like the growling of a dog.

Rarrer looked around frightened, but he couldn't see anything.

"It must have been the wustling of one of the curtains," said he to himself consolingly, and then he began anew by putting out his other leg.

Again the same noise was heard as before, but much louder, and more energetically. This time, however, Rarrer was not frightened, and did not look around for the cause.

"Ah!" he murmured, with stoical resignation; "I know now what was the mattah. My fohmeh twousers weah too wide, and these ah too nawow. 'Of what use is it foh cweatuhs like me to cwawl about heaven and eawth?' But this little accident shall not pwewent me fwom making an attempt to save myself. Heah goes, once moah!"

He then grasped the window-sill with his left hand, raised his right leg energetically, totally regardless of the repeated ripping and tearing sounds thereby produced; regardless, also, of the cold air blowing upon the exposed part, and then thrust his leg out.

"So fah, so good!" said he to himself. "Now, then, foahwads, once moah!"

By another movement he found himself sitting across the window, one leg dangling outside in the air, which struck him as being very cold. He then turned around, so that his back was to the street, and began to meditate what to do next. After a while he began to angle with the outside leg, and soon he felt that his foot touched some hard object.

"Ah!" thought Rarrer. "Now I am down. God be pwaised!"

"Oh!" a voice suddenly exclaimed below. "Thunder and lightning! who is treading on my head, there?"

And in the next minute the strong, callous hands of the occupant of the cellar, who happened to come out of doors just then, grasped Rarrer's leg, and began to tug at it with great force, as if he wanted to tear it from the body.

"Heaven help me!" groaned the poor youth. "The wascal will teah my limb off!"

But the more the fellow pulled, the more tenaciously Rarrer clung to the window, and the more energetically he sought to release his foot.

Suddenly a tremendous crash was heard.

Like the end of a strong rubber-band that had been stretched to the utmost, Rarrer rebounded into the room, when his pedal extremity was released so suddenly as to almost break every bone in his body. At the same time a noise was heard as of a body falling violently upon the stoney pavement outside.

"God be pwaised!" groaned Rarrer, lying upon the floor immovable. "I am at least safe now, but what a bump I have on my bwow!"

"Drat that fellow!" cursed the man on the sidewalk. "I pulled something off him, but it slipped out of my hands!"

After lying a while on the floor, Rarrer got up and walked to the window again.

"What is this? I am limping?" said he, looking down at his feet.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, after he had examined his lower extremity. "The fellow has pulled my boot off. That is weally unpleasant, but it is bettah than having a leg pulled off. My God!" he added, "what a howible day this has been. I am unable to get anything to eat, oh to escape from this dwead-

ful twap! My strength is entirely gone. How will this end? how will this end?"

He then limped to the sofa, sank down upon it and groaned:

"I must lie down, I am unable to beah it any longah; I am so exhausted that I am becoming indiffewent to what happens to me."

And he stretched himself out at full length upon Major Rumpel's sofa, closed his eyes and relapsed into a state of utter impotence.

Pretty soon he heard a dull murmur outside which gradually roused him from his helpless condition, for the words, which presently became distinct enough for him to hear, evidently related to him.

"There is the window still open," said a harsh voice, "from which he tried to get out, and in doing so trod upon my head. How bold the thieves are getting to be now! Barely is the major and his housekeeper gone when they break into his rooms."

Rarrer trembled.

"The scoundrel must be inside still," said another voice. "We'll root him out!"

Rarrer leaped off the sofa upon his one-boot and one-stocking foot.

"God have mehcy upon me!" moaned he. "My suffewings are not yet at an end! I may be awested and punished for a thief!"

"We'll make him smart when we catch him," said a hoarse, fiery voice, and then the sounds died away as if the persons were retreating. But after a few minutes the noise reappeared from a different direction, and then there was begun a dreadful knocking at the door of the room, as if it was intended to break it down.

"Come out o' there!" cried a voice, "or we'll get an officer to fetch you out!"

"Merciful heavens!" groaned the poor youth. "I am lost!"

Fear lent him new strength. With a bound he reached the window to see whether he could now venture to jump out. But, oh, horrors! in the darkness he recognized below a big errand-boy with a broom on his shoulder, evidently on the lookout for him.

"It is impossible foh me to get out this way!" said he with a moan, recoiling from the window. "My woad to the stweet is cut off. I must hide myself heah, somewheahs."

Again the thundering noise was heard at the door, and a voice called out loudly:

"If you don't come out voluntarily, we'll maul you."

A cold sweat broke out upon Rarrer's forehead.

"'Of what use is it for misevable cweatures like me to cwal about between heaven and earth?'" groaned he, instinctively.

However, with two hasty strides he hurried through the ante-room and while the threatening and rapping at the door became louder and louder, he penetrated into the darkness of the adjacent room in which he blindly felt about with outstretched hands.

Suddenly he ran against a table that stood in the middle of the room with so much vehemence as to tilt it up on two of its legs. Instantly there resounded a rattling and sliding noise followed by a crash of dishes upon the floor.

It was the coffee service which the fat Augusta had left standing upon the table before she rode away with the major.

"It's getting woss and woss!" groaned poor Rarrer. "I have huht my leg dweadfully!"

The rattling of the door sounded to him as if a

key was being inserted into the lock, and he rushed away into the Egyptian darkness of a room with an open door and soon encountered an object which by the sense of touch he recognized to be a bed with bedding.

"Just the thing!" said he, much pleased with his discovery. "I'll get into it and hide myself in it."

He was about to suit the action to the words when he thought he heard footsteps in the front room and he started again like a scared hare, rushing on with outstretched hands as fast as his trembling legs could carry him. He now stopped for a moment and snuffed the air.

"Ah!" said he. "I am in the kitchen. I smell some victuals heah. If I weah not puhsued I could wevel heah in some eatables."

"Climb in through the window, Fritz," he heard a voice from the outside say, "and rout him out."

Rarrer dashed forward and ran against the chimney, striking his head with such vehemence as to make it ring.

After resting a moment for the purpose of recovering from the shock, Rarrer stooped and began to feel about with his hands, and in doing so he made such a racket by the upsetting of the tin pans, kettles and pots that it must have been heard on the street. He then climbed upon the hearth, stepped into the hot ashes with his bootless foot, which made him hop, and then climbed up into the chimney, where he braced himself with his back against one side and his knees against the other, and in this position he stuck.

"Let the bloodhounds come in now!" he muttered, with the utmost satisfaction. "I don't think they will find me now. But if the unhappy thought should occuah to them to build a fiah, I'll

be woasted and suffocated by the flames and the smoke!"

He had not been long in the described position when his knees began to pain him dreadfully.

"I am no better adapted to be a chimney sweep-ah than anything else," murmured he to himself. "And when the little stwength I have should give out I'll fall into the hot ashes with my wipped open twousses oah into a pot full of hot watah." His situation became so painful and dangerous that he concluded to get down and seek a hiding place that was less so, but in his attempt to extricate himself from the chimney he tried to steady himself with his hands in order to release his knees, but failed, and he came down all in a heap, plump upon the pile of hot ashes on the hearth.

"Just as I thought!" he groaned, endeavoring to get up, but only succeeded in upsetting a kettle with hot water, which fortunately fell with its mouth directed away from him.

"Let's go, boys," Rarrer heard one of the men outside say. "The fellow is in all probability gone. There is no use our freezing here in waiting for him to come out. Let us tell the policeman when he comes along, and let him watch for him. Old Rumpel will not thank us for our trouble. Shouldn't wonder if the thief already got out by the rear window!"

After a little more conversation, Rarrer heard the persons walk away, and then everything was quiet.

"Pwaised be the heavenly powehs!" exclaimed Rarrer, in tones that sounded almost as joyous as those of the three men in the fiery furnace.

With the disappearance of danger his pangs of hunger reappeared, more intensified than ever, and he said to himself:

"Theah must be some eatables heah. Ah, heah

is something," he added, quickly, snatching something he found lying on a pan, and with feverish haste carrying it to his mouth.

"Oh, blast it!" he exclaimed, dropping it quickly. "It is a howible dish wag. What a disgusting taste it has!"

After sputtering a number of times and wiping his tongue repeatedly, he began to feel about cautiously again. "Ah!" he continued, "here is something that is soft and cold, but I must not be so hasty with it."

He, therefore, first carefully smelt it and then broke off a small piece and tasted it.

"Ah!" said he, smacking his lips, "it is cold pancake. It tastes delicious, pehfectly delicious!"

He was just in the act of breaking off a larger piece when he distinctly heard a noise in the front room.

He listened and cast a hasty glance through the doors, which had been left open.

The noise became louder and more distinct, and by the light from the lamp in the street he plainly saw figures moving about in the room.

A cold sweat broke out again upon Rarrer's forehead.

"My puhsuas!" he gasped, terror stricken. "They only pwentended to go away, and managed to gain an entwance into the room. They mean to do me mischief, the heartless cweatues. I must get into the chimney again."

"Where is he?" he heard a rough voice asking in the front room.

"I don't know, I am sure I can't find him either," replied a softer voice.

"They are looking for me!" gasped Rarrer, with lightning-like rapidity mentally resolving upon a plan of action. "To twy to get into the chimney

will make too much noise, and moahovah it will also take too long to do it. What is to be done?"

"Perhaps he is in the kitchen," said the rough voice again.

"Very likely he is. I'll go and see," returned the other.

Rarrer now heard steps approaching.

"They ah coming," he moaned, and urged on by the instinct of self-preservation, he snatched the almost whole cold pancake, thrust it under his buttoned-up coat, and with a few rapid strides rushed into the room adjacent to the kitchen, felt about quickly for the bed which he had previously discovered, dived into it with the rapidity of thought, and pulled the feather bed over his head.

In a few moments he heard some one treading upon the broken pieces of china which were still lying upon the floor, followed by the wailling voice of a female.

"What is the matter?" asked the gruff voice in the ante-room again.

"Thieves must have been here," replied the softer voice. "The coffee service has been thrown upon the floor and broken. My God, what a loss!"

"Of what use will a coffee service be to us now?" groaned a bass voice. "We will drink no more coffee. Make a light."

Rarrer again heard the rattling and crackling noise in the room, and soon the rays of light penetrated between the bed clothes.

"God help me!" growled at the same time the voice in the ante-room.

"Holy angels protect me!" screeched almost simultaneously a female voice in the back room.

"Augusta, the corpse has jumped out through the window!" cried the bass voice in the front room.

"Herr Major, there is a man in my bed!" shrieked the housekeeper in the back room.

The major seized the rusty unloaded pistols and rushed to the protection of his housekeeper.

"Roderick, my dear Roderick, spare me! I am innocent!" cried the fat Augusta, throwing her thick arms around the major's neck, still holding the burning candle in her hand.

"Go away! You'll burn me with the light!" cried the major. Augusta put the candle on the table and blubbered again:

"Roderick, my dear Roderick, I am innocent!" throwing her fleshy arms around the major's neck again.

"Thunder and lightning, you are choking me!" gasped old Rumpel.

"Believe me, Roderick, I have no cause to blush before you," added Augusta, "I know not how this man got into my bed."

"How do you know it is a man?" asked the major.

"Oh Roderick!" said Augusta, blushingly, "see he has a boot on!" And she pointed to a booted foot which stuck out from beneath the bed covering.

"It is a woman! she has one stocking on!" retorted Rumpel, feeling at Rarrer's bootless foot which stuck out beyond the bed-clothes too.

"Foah heaven's sake don't tickle the sole of my foot. I'll get cwamps if you do," cried Rarrer throwing back the feather bed and raising himself into a sitting posture.

Major Rumpel and the fat Augusta recoiled in horror.

"The corpse!" cried the major.

"God forgive me my sins!" moaned Augusta, throwing the apron over her head, to shut out the horrible sight from her eyes.

"Thank Heavens that you have weturned, Hevv Majoh W–W–Wumpel!" said Rarrer.

"Sir, you are dead!" cried Rumpel.

"No, sah; not yet," returned Rarrer, "but it would not have been vewy long now, and I would have pevished from hungah!"

"Talks of perishing from hunger!" cried the major. "Your mind is affected. You are poisoned just as I am, and Augusta!"

Rarrer jumped out of bed and stared at the major aghast.

"You must have a strong constitution," continued old Rumpel. "You haven't drank any milk at all, have you?"

Rarrer did not know whether he was awake or asleep.

"You were dead already, wasn't you?" asked Rumpel.

"I was dead alweady?" repeated Rarrer, a chill running through him.

"Yes!" asserted the major. "The poison must have taken a terrible effect upon you, for you are already black in the face!"

The unfortunate Rarrer felt that his legs were about to give way beneath him, he glanced about the room for a mirror, but not seeing one he held up his hands to his face.

They were black too!

He shuddered, and felt about with his hands for some support.

"Come, unfortunate boy, and drink with us," said Rumpel, gloomily. "Mayhap you can still be saved, but I fear it is too late."

He then seized Rarrer by the waist with one hand and the candle with the other, and followed by Augusta, he conducted him into the front room.

"Sit down!" said he, dropping Rarrer like a bundle of straw into a chair.

He then picked up a large tin can, took a long draught at it himself first, and then put the beak into Rarrer's mouth, and said to him:

"Drink!"

Rarrer swallowed mechanically the tepid warm milk. Soon he winked with his eyes that he had enough. But the major paid no attention to his gestures.

"Drink!" he thundered, again holding the can still higher.

"I can't dwink any moah!" gurgled Rarrer, grasping the tin beak with both hands to keep it away from his mouth.

But the major pushed it all the more forcibly toward him, and held it up all the higher behind.

"Drink, unfortunate man!" he roared.

Rarrer's head began to swell and his eyes to bulge out of their sockets.

"He is dying!" shrieked the fat Augusta.

The major put down the tin can and looked his patient in the face.

"I think so, too!" said he, sighing deeply, taking a long draught at the milk-can again.

"I'll buhst!" groaned the poor young man.

"Heavens! don't burst upon my clean floor!" shrieked the housekeeper, who was a true exponent of "the ruling passion strong in death,"—mindful of cleanliness to the last.

"I'll see whether his heart is still beating," said the major, and suiting the action to the words, he put his hand into Rarrer's bosom, but quickly pulled it out again with an outcry as if he had encountered a reptile.

"His heart is cold!" said he, looking at his housekeeper horrified.

"My Heavenly Father!" cried Augusta, again throwing her apron over her head.

"Feel his heart, Augusta!" urged the major; "it's perfectly cold."

"I can't!" cried the fat housekeeper.

"Feel it!" ordered old Rumpel.

"I can't, I can't!" replied Augusta, beseechingly.

The major began to roll his eyes threateningly, grasped Augusta's right arm, and, despite her resistance, thrust her hand into Rarrer's bosom.

Augusta uttered a shriek loud enough to awaken the dead, the moment her hand came in contact with the cold heart of Rarrer.

"Isn't it so?" asked Rumpel, forcibly keeping her hand in Rarrer's bosom.

"Oh, heavens!" said the stout maiden, after a moment's silence, "what is this, and how did it get here, I wonder?" she added.

"What new discovery have you made now?" asked Rumpel, alarmed.

"Well, this beats everything! How did it get here, I'd like to know!" she repeated, amazed.

"Who? What?" asked old Rumpel, bewildered.

"Why, my pancake!" replied Augusta, unbuttoning Rarrer's coat and taking possession of her pastry again.

"Well, well!" was all the major could utter, so completely was he overcome by surprise.

Then he raised his voice, and called to his ward:

"Young man, where did you get our pancake?"

At the word pancake some very pleasant recollections seemed to pass through Rarrer's mind. His pale countenance became somewhat animated; he opened his tired eyes, smiled a little, and put out his hand toward the pastry, which Augusta held in her arms like a recovered flag.

"For heaven's sake, don't," exclaimed the ma-

jor, pushing his housekeeper away. "It may kill you on the spot. But drink some more milk!" added he, raising the tin can with the long spout once more, and placing it to Rarrer's lips,

"No!" cried the latter fiercely. "Leave me alone. I shan't dwink anothah dwop!"

He then jumped up from his chair, pulled out his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow.

Old Rumpel gazed upon Rarrer with an expression of the utmost horror.

"My God, young man, your face is becoming discolored in streaks, and your skin is pealing off!" he cried. "These are the worst evidences of poisoning."

Rarrer was so frightened now that every nerve in his body trembled; he then looked at his handkerchief.

"Has the poison already paralyzed your tongue?" asked the major, sympathetically.

"Tell me what makes you think that I am poisoned?" returned Rarrer, who seemed to comprehend how matters stood.

"Why," replied Rumpel, in a tone of voice as if it was perfectly natural; "if Augusta and I are poisoned, then you must be still more so!"

"Foah my paht, you may be poisoned as much as you like," retorted Rarrer, who was getting angry; "but do me the favoh, and leave me out. As I told you befoah, I am famished, but not poisoned!"

He then limped to where Augusta stood, broke off a piece of the cold pancake, and hastily thrust it into his mouth.

When the major saw what Rarrer had done, he ran for the milk can again, but the poor fellow got quickly behind the table and made repellent motions with his hands.

"Keep away fwom me with yoah wetched milk!" cried he to Rumpel, who was about to charge upon him with the can. "I feel dweadful after dwinking it!"

"Don't be so reckless, young man!" thundered old Rumpel. "You don't understand this thing at all. Milk is an antidote, if used early!"

"But I am not poisoned!" retorted Rarrer, who was becoming angry. "And who would poison me?"

"Don't you know?" cried Rumpel.

"No, I don't!"

"Why, that woman, Madame Baldrian!"

Rarrer looked abashed.

"What?" asked he, believing that he had not heard aright.

"Madame Baldrian!" cried the major. "The poison seems to have affected your hearing now."

"You want to amuse youahself at my expense," said Rarrer; "but I must sewiously wequest you to end the mattah and give me something to eat, foah I am stawing!"

He then walked up to the fat housekeeper again, broke off another piece of pancake and hastily swallowed it.

"You do not seem to know much about what is going on in Berlin," began the major again, "if you are unaware of the doings of that woman and her occupation."

"Why, what does she do? and what does she occupy herself with?" asked Rarrer, becoming quite inquisitive, despite his torturing hunger.

"She poisons the hearts of men in cold blood!" said old Rumpel.

Rarrer laughed.

"She undermined the life of poor Frohberg," observed the major.

Rarrer's face at first expressed surprise, and then thoughtfulness.

"Madame Baldrian gave him slow poison," continued Rumpel, "though he may not yet be aware of it. But the dose is large enough either to cause his death gradually or quickly."

Rarrer was thinking profoundly.

"In one word, Madame Baldrian is a heartless poisoner."

"Nonsense!" cried Rarrer, "who has been fooling you?"

"Fooling me?" cried old Rumpel, boldly. "How dare you use such an expression, young man! General Hufenagel spoke of it in our club, and the other gentlemen are aware of it, too."

"You misunderstood the whole affaih," cried Rarrer.

"Sir!" roared the major, becoming purple in the face. "How dare you say I misundertand a thing? Either I understand it correctly or I do not understand it at all. It seems more likely that you know nothing at all about it, your mind not being able to comprehend much anyway; I saw that the moment I first laid my eyes on you."

"How?" exclaimed Rarrer, becoming red in the face.

"I wish I had never met you," went on the major, who did not seem to hear Rarrer's question.

"Why?" roared the latter again, angrily rolling his eyes, something he had never done before.

"Because every time I meet you, you bring me misfortune!" cried the major.

"That's not twue, eithah!" exclaimed the young man. "Didn't I wendah you excellent sehvice today?"

"To the devil with your excellent service!" growled Rumpel, becoming hotter and hotter. "I

gave you a notice to deliver at the employment bureau, and you sent a poisoner to me."

"To the devil with youah untwuthfulness!" retorted Rarrer. "Despite my excwuciating pains I agwee to cawy a message foah you to the beauwau, so as to save you a walk. Being conscientious, I attend to youah affaih first, and seek my dentist afterwards. After this bwute has pulled out a wong tooth I am still considevate enough to go and weport to you, notwithstanding my tevvible pains, that evewything has been done as you wished, and that a lady would come to-day to engage youah housekeepah."

"She engaged the d—l, and not my housekeeper," exclaimed the major, wrathy.

"But how do you wecognize my sehvices? How do you compensate me foah my twouble?" continued Rarrer, hotly, without taking any notice of the major's remark. "Having fallen asleep heah fwom sheeah exhaustion, you and youh housekeepeh go away, lock me in youah wooms and leave me to pevish from hungeh!"

"We left you because you were dead!" cried old Rumpel. "Dead men require no food!"

"Wubbish!" holloaed Rarrer, "I am not a dead man. It seems to me you have dwunk a little too much on yoah pleasuah twip which you made with youah cook oh housekeepeh!"

"To the devil with such pleasure trips!" cried the major, pulling his hair. "And I drank nothing but milk, milk, milk! Do you understand me?"

"That's all the same to me!" cried Rarrer in return, becoming still more provoked. "One can get dwunk on milk, too, if indulged in to excess, as you evidently have done. You cannot, howevah, deny the facts that you locked me in yoah wooms and left me in a helpless condition. On awaking I found my

toothache gone, but the pangs of hungah weah almost unbeawable, not having eaten anything in thwee days. I called to a boy fwom the window to get me something to eat; but he only laughed at me. I attempted to get out of the window, but a fellow caught me by the leg and pulled so that I feaahed he would teah my limb fwom my body. And after I got back into the wooms, the people thweatened to captuah me and awest me foh a thief. I wetweated into the weah wooms, and sought to hide myself. In the dahkness I upset a table, but finally got up into the chimney, fell down into the hot ashes upon the heahth with my twousahs weaped—"

Rarrer, despite the animation which he had worked himself into, cast a glance of anxiety upon the stout Augusta, quickly buttoned up his coat, and then went on:

"Upset a kettle of hot watah, but which fohtunately was turned away fwom me."

Again Rarrer cast a glance full of apprehension upon the stout Augusta, and again went through the motion of buttoning his coat.

"Are you through with your story?" inquired the major.

"No!" cried the youth, becoming eloquent again. "Afteh beawing all these tohtuahs, I heahd my puhsuehs go away, and then uhged on by my hungah pains, I sought to find something to eat in yoah kitchen, but found only that cold pancake, and was about to devouah it, when I heahed people walking in the fwont woom. I natuwally thought that some one had got in to look foh me, so I wushed away and hid myself in the bed."

"Do you see now, Roderick, that I am innocent?" exclaimed the fat maiden, rushing up to the major, with the evident intention of embracing him without putting down her pancake.

"B'rr!" uttered the major. "Go away with that detestable thing! I am unable to bear the sight of it when it is warm, but now it is actually disgusting to me!"

"Well, the west you know," continued Rarrer. "You come home, fwighten me by telling me that I am poisoned, fill me to ovehflowing with hovvible milk, and in the end maintain that I bwought you bad luck, but which is just the wevehse. How can you excuse youh conduct?"

"You are crazy!" said the major.

"No, you ahe cwazy!" retorted Rarrer. "You tweat me shamefully afteh being so obliging to you, and sending you a lady to engage youah housekeepah."

"But she did not engage her!" roared old Rumpel.

"What did she do, then?" asked Rarrer.

"In order to awaken no suspicions against her, and to have full play, she prevailed upon us to believe that we are in love with each other, and that we must get married," retorted the major. "And after she had obtained from me a compulsory promise, she left us. She had accomplished her object. She put arsenic instead of sugar into the coffee. I only ascertained that she was Madame Baldrian after I had swallowed the poison."

Rarrer's face at first looked like that of a cat when it hears a terrible thunder; then he puffed out his cheeks as far as he could, like one who wishes to suppress a violent outburst of laughter.

"Well," continued the major, "I had given my word, and we all must die once, anyway; so what did I risk by marrying Augusta? You see I wanted to die with a clear conscience, and that woman told me such awful things, that I packed Augusta into a droschke, drove to the nearest pastor, told him that

I had been poisoned, had him perform a distress-marriage for us, and after that the holy sacrament."

Rarrer was now unable to restrain himself, but burst out in a loud guffaw.

"Sir, how dare you laugh at such things?" cried the major, greatly incensed. "You are totally devoid of reverential feeling!"

"Heavens, is it possible; is it possible?" cried Rarrer, clasping his hands to his sides to restrain his laughter.

"Of course, it is possible!" retorted the major. "After the holy service was performed the humane pastor urged it upon us as a holy duty to seek medical aid, for the purpose of saving our lives. To tell you the truth, I had no great desire to do that," he added, looking at his housekeeper, who returned his glance with a bewitching smile; "but Augusta there plagued me so, and self-preservation is a Christian duty, the good pastor told us, so we drove away to a doctor, though I was convinced that it was altogether useless."

The fat Augusta blubbered into her apron, and Rarrer availed himself of the opportunity to break off another piece from the cold pancake, and swallow it.

"I certainly might have spared myself the trouble and expenses of driving about so much," went on the major, "for at this time of the day no physician is at home. We called on twenty-seven doctors, but every one of them was out, and as I was growing constantly weaker, and knowing that milk is an antidote for arsenic, I purchased a can of milk, and actually think that this article has prolonged my life. Still, death is sure to take place, perhaps this very night," he added gloomily, "for whomsover Madame Baldrian lays her hand upon, his end is near."

"No, it is just the wevehse," cried Rarrer. "His twoubles only just begin."

"How so?" asked Rumpel, unable to comprehend him.

"Because Madame Baldwian is not a poisonah, as you suppose," answered Rarrer, "but a well-known, much sought foh, and a much cussed match-makeh!"

The major looked as if he had been struck by lightning, for he started as Othello did into whose ear Iago instilled the first drops of jealousy.

"As I told you, you misunderstand the whole affaih," went on Rarrer. "What was told to you wegahding that woman destwoying the hearts of men, and poisoning theah lives, was only meant figwatively."

The major heaved a painful sigh.

"And Frohberg?" asked he, with a gurgling noise in his throat.

"She pwevailed upon him also to mawy," went on the young man, a dark shadow passing over his pale countenance. "And you, too, have fallen a victim to the adwoit mawage plotteh," he added, after a brief pause. "That is the cowect explanation of the gweat misundehstanding that has caused us so much twouble and much bad blood between us to-day."

The major began to totter.

"Roderick, my dear Roderick, what ails you?" cried the fat Augusta, bursting out in a tumult of joy and clasping her arms around the drooping major. "Has the sudden joy affected you so? Are you stupefied by the happiness, that we belong to each other forever? Oh, I'll make you so happy, so happy! You shall get no more oatmeal broth nor any more pancakes! When you'll want to sleep afternoons, I'll polish no windows, but rock your dear

head tenderly upon my bosom. I'll not leave your side; I'll nurse you, and tend you so lovingly, as no man was nursed or tended before."

A shudder ran through the form of the old major. Augusta led him to a chair and tenderly deposited him in it.

"Sit down, my dear Roderick!" said she, smiling. "The joy was too much for you. That good, dear, prophetic lady, Madame Baldrian," she added, "predicted everything. To her we are indebted for our happiness!"

The major feebly clinched his fists, and a dark and threatening scowl overclouded Rarrer's countenance.

"She will get her desehts some day," he murmured to himself.

He now roused himself and added, quickly: "Now that mattahs between us have been satisfactovily explained, Hevv Majoh, I will leave you to youah happiness."

Rumpel nodded feebly, and Rarrer was about to leave, when Augusta seized him by the arm and cried:

"Stay! You musn't leave us!"

"And why not?" asked Rarrer, frightened.

The housekeeper became dreadfully embarrassed, her cheeks flushed crimson, her eyes sank to the floor, her fingers played with her apron strings, and her lips murmured, lowly:

"Because—heavens—don't you understand the position I am in now?"

"No!" answered Rarrer.

"Why you have just heard," gasped the fat Augusta, "that a distress-marriage has taken place between us, because we supposed that we were poisoned. But, since we are likely to live, it is necessary that a proper marriage ceremony be per-

formed between us, before—before—everything is in order!"

"Yes, that is so," said Rarrer. "Now, however, I can go."

"Stay!" cried Augusta again, quickly. "What are you thinking of?" and then she added, with charming modesty: "I am, in fact, only engaged to him!"

"Certainly, you are only engaged to him!" confirmed Rarrer. "But now pehmit me to go. I am tevvibly hungwy."

"Stay, stay, I beg of you, for heaven's sake, stay!" cried Augusta again, beseechingly. And then, with downcast eyes, she breathed the words: "I can't remain with him alone to-night in these rooms!"

Rarrer looked as if he would like to creep out of his skin. Then he said, looking for his hat: "I must go now. I can't wemain heah any longah undeh any cihcumstances."

Augusta seemed disposed to submit to the inevitable, and she sighed from the very bottom of her soul.

Suddenly, however, her gaze fell upon Rarrer, who was still looking for his hat, and a new hope blazed up in her eyes.

"Sir," she cried, "you can't leave us!"

Rarrer started frightened.

"Because you have only one boot on!" joyfully exclaimed the fat maiden.

"Blast it!" exclaimed Rarrer, contemplating his stocking-foot, which, however, was as black as his boot. "Ask the fellow in the basement," said he, addressing himself to the housekeeper, "to wetuhn me my boot."

"The man in the basement is already asleep," said Augusta, delighted.

Rarrer looked sad and reflected. Suddenly he seemed to have hit upon something.

"Hevv Majov!" he cried, into Rumpel's ears.

The old man started up and looked around frightened, as if he feared a new calamity had befallen him.

"Lend me a wight boot," cried Rarrer into his ears.

The major did not seem to understand him.

"Be so kind as to lend me a boot for my wight foot!" repeated Rarrer. "I told you that the fellow in the basement pulled my boot off when I attempted to get out at the window."

"Jest so!" answered Rumpel, mechanically, without making any attempt to rise.

"I cehtainly can't go out into the stweet in my stocking-foot," continued Rarrer.

"Jest so!" remarked the major, mechanically again, without making any attempt to rise.

"The Herr Major—I meant to say, my Roderick—has spurs on his boots!" observed Augusta, who had not yet given up all hopes of detaining Rarrer as the guardian of her virtue for the night.

"Yes, I have spurs on my boots. It is a relic of our military service. All the members of our club have spurs on their boots."

"It don't mattah," replied the young man. "A spuhed boot is bettah than none at all, anyway. I beg of you, Hevv Majov, to accommodate me with a boot."

The major's face became overcast with a painfully bitter remembrance.

"Bring one of my boots," said he, addressing his charming bride.

The fat cook departed very unwillingly, and stayed away so long that Rarrer was beginning to suffer from spasm of the stomach again. When at last

she returned she had something in her hand, which she carried at arm's length.

"There!" said she, holding the article toward Rarrer with two fingers. "It is not polished, and will also be somewhat too large for you!"

Rarrer recoiled a step, and, with the upper part of his body bent forward, he contemplated the article very thoughtfully which Augusta held out toward him.

"Is that a boot?" he asked, in amazement.

"Certainly!" returned the cook. "What did you take it for?"

"Foh a boot that was!" said Rarrer. "Foh the ghost of a boot that has no west in its gwave, and has to woam about in this world to fwighten people."

It certainly was a queer-looking thing, and Rarrer could not be blamed for not taking hold of it.

The age of the article, which was supposed to be a boot, was difficult to surmise; at any rate, it undoubtedly dated back from the time that the major was in the service. That was proved by the fierce-looking and rusty spur, with its large wheel, but which no longer revolved on its axis.

Ten years of inactivity and an unhealthy detention in a dusty and dark room had completely dried up, shrunk, and twisted the brave major's pedal covering, so that the part that usually covers the ball and adjacent portion of the foot now stood almost at right angles with the worn-off, gaping sole, and resembled the head of a trout with widely stretched open mouth, as it is generally served in the hotels in Saxonia and Silesia.

The old, emaciated straps looked like the ears of a lazy clod-hopper that had been frequently pulled; the leg resembled the wrinkled skin of an old ape, and the whole boot was so thickly covered with

mould and dust that its former black color could no longer be seen. One would have been more likely to suppose that it was an old, formerly white, dirty stocking.

"Well, why don't you take it?" said the housekeeper, becoming impatient.

Rarrer bent his head a little nearer to the problematical boot, blew upon it with all his might, and then quickly drew back his head and upper part of his body.

A thick, heavy, foul-smelling cloud of dust rose up high, like the dreams of a long-forgotten period, and like a powder-mantle enveloped the three persons present.

"Hatschie! hatschie! hatschie!" ejaculated first the major, then Augusta, and then Rarrer.

The housekeeper now dropped the boot, and it lay upon the floor helpless and forsaken, like a disabled, decrepit old man without his crutches.

"Have you no othah to offah me?" asked Rarrer of the *fiancé* housekeeper.

That lovely creature shook her head so decisively and so energetically, that Rarrer deemed it best for his health to lose no more time in useless attempts to obtain another.

He therefore rolled up the right leg of his trousers as far as his knee, seized the old boot very carefully by its emaciated straps, stuck his foot in at the top and pulled.

But he barely got his big-toe down upon the sole.

"Stronger!" said the bride-elect, encouragingly.

Rarrer pulled till he was black in the face.

"Stronger!" cried the fat cook, like a commanding general who is leading a column against an enemy.

Rarrer bent all his energies, braced himself against the table, and pulled till his eyes protruded from their sockets.

Suddenly there was a crash, and in the next moment Rarrer lay upon his back with a strap on the index finger of each hand, and the old boot dangling on his big-toe.

"What fell there?" asked old Rumpel, without looking around.

"Nothing, my dear Roderick!" cried the stout Augusta into his ears, and as Rumpel heard that sweet voice he lost all desire to make further enquiries.

Then the cook, who now gave up all hopes of detaining the young man over night, kneeled down, forming a foot-stool for him, took his right foot upon her lap, pressed the old boot forcibly, and thumped and hammered upon the sole in a merciless manner, in order to get the heel in.

"Oh!" cried Rarrer, "you will bweak my leg oh wuptuah my sinues. Oh, Oh!"

"Be still, and let me get it on for you!" said the fat virgin, constantly hammering and pressing so that repeated clouds of dust rose up from the old boot. "There!" said she, giving the heel a final blow so violently that Rarrer almost made a back somersault. "There, now get up!"

She now got up from the floor and then assisted Rarrer to rise.

As the sorely tried youth once more formed a perpendicular line to the surface of the earth, he made a wry face and painfully drew up his right foot in the air.

"I can't twead the gwound," said he. "I feel as if I had a lot of sharp nails in my boot."

"It will not be so bad after you have walked a little," said the housekeeper, consolingly.

Rarrer took courage, and while suffering agony walked through the room like a lame crane who had been ill for a long time, and once more had got out into the open air.

"Do you see!" said the fat cook. "You are doing very well!"

Rarrer cast an angry glance at her.

"Would you like to twy it?" he asked.

"No, thanks!" she replied. "My Parisian shoes are quite good enough for me."

After limping up and down the room once more, Rarrer concluded to try and reach the nearest restaurant; he therefore picked up his hat and said:

"Adieu, Hevv Majoh!" into Rumpel's best ear, who still sat in an apathetic condition.

The old man got up.

"Do you want to go already?" he asked, smiling sadly.

"Yes! It is high time. If I don't I'll become a corpse in weal earnest. Good-night, and pleasant dweams to you!"

The major smiled in a woe-begone manner.

"Oh, my Roderick!" cried the affectionate cook, embracing the major from behind. "You'll dream of me, won't you? and it will be a pleasant dream!" she added, with charming *naïveté*.

"I thank you, young man," said the major, giving Rarrer his hand after he had succeeded in releasing himself from the loving embrace of his housekeeper-bride.

The latter opened the door for Rarrer, which led out into the dark hallway, and he hobbled out in the blissful expectation of soon gratifying the cravings of his stomach.

"You should have shown him the way out with a light," said the old man.

He then went to the still open door and called out:

"Take care, young man, there are two short steps near the front door!"

At the same time a noise as of the falling of a heavy body was heard.

"You ah vevy kind!" cried Rarrer's voice. "I fell just now, but it is of no consequence!" In the next minute the hall-door was slammed to and then everything was quiet.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOMESTIC COMFORT.

Why are mothers-in-law in such bad repute? Do they deserve to be denounced so throughout the whole world?

Doubtless there is some reason for it. And it is a remarkable fact that the best mothers become the worst mothers-in-law, and the best mothers-in-law, as a rule, were not particularly good mothers.

This is easy to explain.

The good mother or the weak mother, which amounts to the same thing in our social life, loves and spoils her daughter so, cares for her so constantly, and becomes accustomed to think and act for her from infancy up, in the minutest detail, till at last she comes to regard the little one as part and parcel of her own soul.

The mother loves the child as herself, and that is saying a good deal, for in loving others we usually only love ourselves, and the daughter recompenses the mother for her love in precisely the same manner.

They satisfy each other completely; they reciprocate their desires; they have no other wish than to remain together; they never wish to leave one another.

But the times change, and we change with them.

The little doll constantly grows larger and larger; the long braids of hair which she was wont to display so proudly, hanging down her back, are now twisted into a fashionable coil upon the top of her

head, the short frock is replaced by a long one with a marked protuberance over a certain part of her anatomy, and she assumes other paraphernalia for the purpose of indicating that she is a "young lady" and ready to accept attentions from the sterner sex.

And as the young lady grows in body so grows also her own self-sufficiency, so grows also her heart; indeed, the latter organ grows even faster than the rest of her body.

But then, if the other parts of the body grow, it is not possible for the heart to remain at a stand-still.

That would be contrary to all justice, contrary to the laws of nature.

And barely has the heart acquired sufficient room to palpitate in when it avails itself of it for the purpose of palpitating to the utmost extent.

The child no longer enjoys her mother's company as she formerly did.

She deems it now altogether too prosaic, too much like being a hired companion or maid. She prefers to walk alone now, in the quiet, shady alleys of the park, and to dream.

This is longing; and in this manner the heart is prepared to receive impressions, like a prepared photographic paper.

A sunny glance from the eye of the right one, sometimes also from that of the wrong one, and his heart is indelibly impressed in the deepest depths of the heart.

This is love, and it now takes complete and exclusive possession of the young girl's breast.

Her mother, so far, does not actually feel offended at it.

She sees in the love of the daughter for her husband the love-life of her own youth reflected; her own courtship and marriage is re-enacted, at the

sight of which she becomes young again; her vanity engenders in her another deception.

But now the bridal condition of her child is at an end; she has become a wife, and assumed the name of her husband, says good-by to her mother, and goes away to her new home.

Barely is she gone when the mother feels the gap in her house, and in her heart.

She envies the son-in-law, she becomes jealous of him; in her heart she accuses her daughter that she loves her no longer as she did formerly; indeed, she finds fault with her for loving her husband. She becomes unjust.

The correspondence now begins between them. The written intercourse is intended to take the place of the oral; the former influence must be maintained. The pure love of the mother becomes tainted with selfishness and imperiousness.

She writes an eight-page letter every other day. She inquires concerning the most private matters, even such things as one does not like to reveal, nor which concern her. She gives a hundred good advices; she meddles with everything; she promises presents if this and the other thing will be done according to her wishes; she feels offended, and slighted at the least disobedience; she becomes unbearable.

The better the mother was, the more intimate and purer the relations between the young married couple are, the more unbearable the mother-in-law becomes.

She never thinks how disagreeable the meddlesomeness of her own mother-in-law was to her, and how she battled with her own mother for her own independence.

She does now what the latter did in times gone by.

Are the mothers and mothers-in-law to be condemned on that account?

Oh, no; for it requires a woman with a generous and noble soul to tear the child from her heart and give it to a stranger, to possess the noble self-sacrifice of finding her own happiness in the undisturbed and uninfluenced happiness of her child, and to abstain from meddling with the latter.

Those mothers and mothers-in-law who do not possess such high and ennobling souls are sufficiently punished by converting the blessing which they intended to confer upon their offspring into a curse, in making unhappy those they intended to make happy.

One's happiness cannot be planned and contrived by another, but must develop itself independently from the inward consciousness of each individual.

The poor mothers and mothers-in-law are like the florists who, by great labor and trouble, raise beautiful and fragrant flowers, and then crush them under their own feet.

The poor mothers and mothers-in-law gradually quench every particle of credit in the breasts of their daughters, gradually tear one thread after the other that holds their souls together, and at last they stand alone and deserted, not because they were isolated by others, as they claim to have been, but because they isolated themselves.

Those who know enough to give up their claims at the right time gain in the end by the apparent loss.

After Rarrer had recovered somewhat from his fall in the hall, and had bidden the major a last good-night, he limped with his spurred and spurless boot along the dark street.

A cold, dry October wind swept through the deserted thoroughfare and stirred up the lights and

fires upon the peat and apple barges into fantastic flickers, a slight but frosty wind rustled through the green but dusky arbors in front of the restaurants, the semi-somnolent droschkies rolled in the distance with a dull, strange noise, the night watchmen appeared already upon the scene of their labors, and Rarrer dragged himself along with one clanging and one dull step upon the smooth, resounding pavement.

In a few minutes he reached the Café Boulevard, which, as we know, is the headquarters of the club of the Old Gentlemen.

Rarrer would have preferred, from habit, to go to the Café Mielenz, where the club of the Young Gentlemen managed to kill a few hours every afternoon, but the Café Mielenz was fifty paces farther, and Rarrer was hungry.

In the little garden in front of the Café Boulevard not a soul was to be seen, and only the flickering gas-lights cast ghostly shadows and danced upon the white tables and chairs.

As Rarrer hobbled along through the covered walk leading to the entrance of the restaurant, an elegiac waiter, with a not very clean towel upon his arm, hurried toward him and asked him what he wished.

"Look heah, waitah," said Rarrer, a little out of breath and considerably embarrassed, attempting to hide his cavalry foot behind his infantry foot, "can I have a pwivate woom heah?"

The elegiac waiter made big eyes at him, and the not immaculate towel upon his arm seemed to blush.

"Be quick, will you, I am in a huvvy," added Rarrer, casting an anxious glance out into the garden, and drawing up his cavalry foot toward the knee-joint of his infantry leg.

The elegiac waiter assumed a highly offended mien.

"No, sir! We don't permit such things here. None but respectable people frequent this place!" said he, turning away in a dignified manner.

It was Rarrer's turn to blush now, and he blushed as intensely as he possibly could.

But another and more powerful feeling—his hunger—made itself felt.

"You don't undahstand me, at all!" began Rarrer. "You ah altogethah wong in attwibuting to me anything impwopah. I only want to be alone foah a while, because an accident occuahd to me."

The waiter was about to return an angry reply, but Rarrer gave him no time to do that.

"You see," he went on, producing his mouldy cavalry foot, "one of my boots has been taken by mistake, and it is impossible foah me to show myself among nice people with this hovvible thing. Foah this weason and no othah would I like to have a woom to myself."

The waiter burst out laughing.

"This is fun!" said he. "There is one comical gentleman in that room who brought his slippers with him, in order to make himself comfortable here. He, too, wanted a private room; but that was the last we had."

Rarrer sadly allowed his head to sink down upon his breast, and he again hid his cavalry foot.

"Perhaps that comical gentleman will allow you to go into his room," said the waiter. "After all he can't object," he added, "for he pays nothing for the use of the room, but only for the refreshments he consumes. Shall I show you into the room?"

Rarrer reflected for a moment, but his constantly increasing hunger overcame all other considerations and he assented.

The waiter led him through a short angular passage, and opened a door.

"Here, sir!" said he.

Rarrer entered hesitatingly and somewhat embarrassed.

At a table in a corner sat a gentleman, with his back toward the door and his feet stretched out upon two chairs, blowing immense clouds of tobacco-smoke before him. Near him upon the floor stood a pair of patent-leather boots. At the noise made by the opening of the door he unwillingly turned around.

"Rarrer!" he exclaimed. "What in the name of all that is strange brings you here?"

The young man laboriously hobbled to the table near which the doctor was seated.

"Well, take a seat, anyway," said Staberow, noticing the intruding waiter. "Do you intend to partake of something so late?"

"Of course I do!" cried Rarrer, almost fiercely, seating himself and thrusting his cavalry foot under the table.

"Would not advise you to," replied the privy counsellor. "It is not healthy to eat so late."

"Excuse me, eating will be vewy healthy foh me to-night," exclaimed Rarrer. "Give me a bill of faiah."

The elegiac being complied with his request.

"Drink a cup of tea," said the doctor; "that is the only thing which, as a physician, I'll allow you to take."

At the word "tea" Rarrer's face assumed an expression of contempt, and with an almost rabid interest perused the bill of fare.

"A beefsteak with potatoes," he finally cried; "but a very large beefsteak and plenty of potatoes," he added, with strong emphasis.

The waiter was about to withdraw.

"But, my dear friend," interposed the doctor, "do you want to kill yourself? A large piece of meat and indigestible potatoes, shortly before going to bed! that's very much like committing suicide."

"No!" protested Rarrer. "It is just the weverse. I am tevvibly hungwy; I am stavving! Quick, waitah!" he added, addressing himself to the elegiac attendant. "And a bottle of pohtah!"

The privy counsellor suffered great professional provocation.

"This is folly!" he cried, raising himself out of his comfortable position. "Don't mind the gentleman, waiter, but bring him a cup of tea and some toast!"

Rarrer cast a highly offended glance upon the doctor and called out to the waiter:

"A vewy large beefsteak with plenty of fwied potatoes!" adding, imperatively, "and a bottle of pohtah, double stout!"

The automatic attendant smilingly turned to go.

"Stay!" ordered the privy counsellor.

"Go!" ordered Rarrer, more imperatively.

The waiter did not know what to do. He felt the correctness of the Holy Scripture: "No man can serve two masters!"

"Go!" cried Rarrer.

"Stay!" cried Staberow, still louder.

This was altogether too much for the unfortunate youth.

Impelled by a sudden and firm resolution he sprang to his feet, limped with his partly rattling and partly dull tread toward the frightened waiter, grasped him by both shoulders, whirled him around, and pushed him out through the door, calling after him in a thundering voice:

"A vewy large beefsteak with plenty of potatoes, and a bottle of pohtah!"

And then he limped back to his chair.

"Why do you make such a queer noise when you walk?" asked the privy counsellor, the new phenomenon diverting his mind from the old subject.

"I'll tell you all about it after I've had something to eat," returned Rarrer. "Foh the pwesent, leave me alone, please, foh I am completely used up."

The doctor was disposed to be more inquisitive, and he eyed the young man with interest as the latter rested his head upon his hands, shut his eyes, and refused to utter a word.

In this way about ten minutes might have passed when the door was opened and the waiter entered, bringing the ordered refreshments.

Rarrer started up with lightning-like rapidity from his apathetic, dreamy attitude.

The waiter placed the steaming beefsteak and large plate full of potatoes before him, wedged the bottle of porter between his knees, and pulled out the cork with a whistling, squeaking sound. He then held the large pot-bellied tumbler a little slantingly and allowed the dark brown foaming liquid to flow into it carefully and slowly.

Rarrer seemed to revel in the odor of the beefsteak with one nostril, and in that of the porter with the other, and his countenance became irradiated with the anticipation of the enjoyment of earthly bliss.

After arranging everything the waiter disappeared. Rarrer grasped the knife and fork, and was just in the act of making a fearful gash into the steaming meat when Dr. Staberow snatched the plate away from him, and he cut into the table-cloth instead.

"Don't eat this, young man," said the privy counsellor, with professional benevolence. "I assure

you eating such heavy victuals late at night is like poison. Leave it alone, please!"

Rarrer grew red in the face from anger.

'Hevv Pwivy Counselloh, I most wespectfully wequest you to weturn me my plate!" cried the young man. "Why do you meddle with my affaiahs?"

"Because I am concerned about you, and I deem it my duty as a physician to prevent you from injuring your health," returned the doctor, pushing the plate away still farther.

"But you ah doing just the weverse!" thundered Rarrer. "You ah doing me an injuwy by depwiving me of sustenance, you short-sighted man, you!"

He put out his hand toward the glass, in which the foam had somewhat subsided, when the privy counsellor snatched it away and put it out of his reach.

"Don't drink it, my friend!" said he; "you are still too hot. You will catch your death if you drink this cold beer."

Rarrer stood up, and as he stood there with the knife in one hand and the fork in the other, he looked like a juvenile Shylock who wanted to cut a pound of flesh from the heart of the Merchant of Venice.

"Give me my beefsteak and pohtah!" he hissed, like an irritated snake. "If you don't give me my wefweshments I'll pevish."

The privy counsellor pushed both plate and glass to the farthest end of the table.

Rarrer stood like an anaconda that had reared itself up and only waited for a favorable moment to pounce upon its prey.

But while the doctor took a puff at his cigar, in order to keep it burning, the left arm of Rarrer suddenly became elongated in such a way that he looked like one of the famous Roman gladiators fencing,

the sharp tines of the fork, sank into the juicy beefsteak, and in the next moment he carried it with lightning-like rapidity to his mouth, and, urged on by his ravenous hunger and the sense of safely getting it down, allowed it at once to disappear into his preternaturally distended mouth.

"Heaven preserve us!" cried the doctor, springing up for the purpose of saving Rarrer from what seemed certain death by choking. "You will surely kill yourself!"

He was about to approach the young man, whose eyes were already bulging out of their sockets, but the latter made a lunge at him with the knife, and he recoiled in affright.

"Have you become crazy, Rarrer?" he cried, actually alarmed. "Why, you act like a veritably crazy man!"

Rarrer shook his head so energetically that Staberow was still more amazed, and could only stare at him. There was certainly good and sufficient reason for causing the doctor surprise and apprehension. For Rarrer made strenuous efforts to master the large and hot piece of meat which he was masticating furiously, the effort of which caused his cheeks to become puffed out and his face bluish-red, his bulging eyes now shut and then opened themselves, and his mouth opened and closed with that wild haste and energy which one sees only in the wild animals in the Zoological Garden when they obtain their day's allowance of meat.

At last, after a great deal of effort and labor Rarrer's cheeks gradually became thinner and the end seemed to have arrived, for he shut his eyes once more, clinched his fists, drew his shoulders up preternaturally high, gave his whole body a violent jerk, and the beefsteak had arrived at its destination.

"Ugh!" uttered Rarrer, when he opened his eyes again and his shoulders had returned to their natural level.

"Is it down?" asked the privy counsellor, and Rarrer nodded affirmatively.

"Hope it'll do you good!" added Staberow.

"Thanks!" responded the youth, as if he was enjoying combined earthly pleasures.

Again he suddenly stretched out his right hand, and, before the doctor could prevent him, seized the glass of porter and poured the dark brown liquid into his gullet, from whence it disappeared into the mysterious depths of his inner man.

"That tasted good," said he, replacing the goblet upon the table and wiping the foam from his lips.

"Are you done now?" asked Staberow.

"No!" replied Rarrer.

"What do you intend to do now?" continued the doctor.

"Eat!" returned Rarrer.

"Hey?" cried the privy counsellor, incredulously.

"And dwink!" added Rarrer.

Again he limped to the door, pulled the cord till the bell resounded like a fire-alarm gong, and returned to the table for the purpose of examining the bill of fare.

He was not quite done when the elegiac waiter entered.

"Did you ring?" he asked.

"Yes!" replied Rarrer. "I want to eat something!"

"Take something light now," Dr. Staberow advised him, who gave up all hope of opposing Rarrer's greediness while the latter seemed capable of swallowing a wax-taper, or even him.

Rarrer looked up from the bill of fare.

"Bwing me anothah beefsteak with potatoes,"

said he, "but a good large one, and anothah bottle of pohtah!" he added.

The waiter disappeared with a sad smile on his countenance.

"You must excuse me," said the privy counsellor, "but I really fear you will get ill from eating so much late at night."

"You need have no feah foh me," replied Rarrer.

"Will you not, at least, explain?" asked Staberow, further.

Rarrer shook his head and said:

"When I have had my suppah! Till then I will not say a wohd!"

He ate another beefsteak with potatoes, drank another bottle of porter, and after that he ate still another beefsteak with potatoes, and drank still another bottle of porter, and when the waiter offered to bring him bread and butter and cheese, he reflected a while as he feared that so much food, late at night, might overload his stomach.

After he had swallowed the last draught of the porter he lit a cigar, stretched out his legs under the table, contentedly blew bluish clouds of smoke before him, which mingled with those of the privy counsellor and formed a heavy, grayish-white mist that enveloped both gentlemen almost completely. Now and then he uttered a low grunt of happiness.

"Well, my dear Rarrer, will you have the kindness now to tell me how you got this cavalry article and acquired such a ravenous hunger?" began the doctor again.

"With pleasah," said Rarrer, and then he related, with the minutest detail, the events that happened to him from the moment that he collided with the Major till he entered the restaurant.

The privy counsellor listened with the utmost at-

tention ; however, he frequently interrupted the relater with a low titter or even loud laughter.

But when the young man reached that part where Madame Baldrian almost forcibly compelled the major to marry his cook, and described in glowing terms the old man's silent despair, the expression of the countenance of the privy counsellor underwent a serious change ; his laughing mien became overclouded by a dark veil of silent grief.

When Rarrer reached the end of his story the doctor allowed his head to sink upon his breast, and remained silent. The young man looked at him and said :

"Well, why so silent all at once? Did my stowy amuse you? It was no laughing mattah to me, yet to anothah it must seem vewy comical."

The privy counsellor sighed.

"Oh, pehhaps I caused you sowow?" asked Rarrer once more.

The privy counsellor sighed again.

"I thank you foh youah sympathy," said Rarrer, pressing Staberow's hand, that hung down nervelessly in his.

"Don't mention it!" returned the doctor, rousing himself from his unpleasant revery. "I sighed at my own sorrow!"

"Console yourself with me," said Rarrer, "foh theah is scahcely anothah man who meets with so many misfohtunes as I."

"In the first place," replied the doctor, "I have never been able to console myself with the fact that another is as unfortunate, or more unfortunate, than I am. When I have the toothache and I am told that Rarrer has it still more severely, will mine thereby become any the less? No ; on the contrary, I feel for the other sufferer too, for, unfortunately, I have a very sensitive nature. In the second place," con-

tinued Staberow, "I have met with a great misfortune, while yours are only slight annoyances."

"What you call slight annoyances ahe enough to dwive one fwantic."

"What's that?" asked the privy counsellor, with a puzzled face.

Rarrer distorted his face as if he wanted to constrict the chink of his glottis, and then squeaked out, even less distinctly than before:

"Why, you know—fwantic!"

The privy counsellor laughed. "Oh, you mean frantic!"

"Yes, of couhse!" answered Rarrer, pouting angrily. "You know well enough that I can't pwonounce the 'av.'"

After that his face again assumed an agreeable expression, and, bending over toward the doctor, he said:

"Now tell me why you bwought youah slippahs with you. Is it too cold for you heah?"

"No, but it is too hot for me at home," replied the privy counsellor.

Rarrer looked decidedly puzzled, and then he asked:

"Why do you have such lahge fiahs in youah wooms?"

"I have no fire in my rooms at all, but my mother-in-law makes it hot for me," returned Dr. Staberow, bitterly.

Rarrer seemed not to understand him, and feelingly asked:

"Youah ladies ahe kind to you, ahe they not?"

"Yes, very!" replied the privy counsellor, who was gradually getting back his Mephistophelian humor. "They have an unconquerable desire to make me happy, and that is my great misfortune. The wise rule of Frederick the Great, that in 'my domain everybody may be happy in his own way,'

has no application in my house. My mother-in-law imagines that I have not yet enjoyed much of life, that I have become ossified and petrified while practising medicine, and it is therefore her duty to awaken me and make me enjoy myself again. But the truth of the matter is that she herself hasn't seen much of life, and now wants to make up for lost time. She is an egotist."

Rarrer's face bore a thoughtful expression.

"Yes, my fwiend," replied the young man, "you belong to the same class, only wewest. You want to west, and thehefoh you want youah ladies to west with you. You ah indeed an egotist!"

The privy counsellor was silent, because he didn't know what reply to make, but his blood had begun to boil, and he was unable to calm it, and therefore proceeded with the recital of his woes:

"My mother-in-law has acquired a sort of Satanic logic. She says, 'I enjoy travelling, consequently you must enjoy it too!' And then my little, charming wife joins, as an echo, and says in her seductive voice, 'I can't imagine why one does not enjoy travelling. Why, it is heavenly, it is grand!' And in order to excite in me a desire to travel, my kind mother-in-law reads to me badly written letters descriptive of travels, every evening till midnight, which I have to listen to in full dress and tight patent-leather boots, because she maintains that a married man who wears a dressing-gown and slippers robs his young wife of the illusion, and charm of matrimonial life, and that that may lead to very serious consequences. However, listening to descriptions of travel under such trying conditions renders travelling to me still more unbearable. And when at last she stops at midnight, and my wife and I wish to retire, my mother-in-law says: 'Come, Ida, dear, and see me to my room, as

you used to do before you were married, do you remember?' 'Yes, mamma, that was delightful!' answers Ida, and then she tells me: 'Just you go to bed, my dear hubby; I shan't disturb you when I come back.' Of course she doesn't disturb me when she comes back an hour later, for I am fast asleep. But the next morning when I come down to breakfast in those torturing patent-leather boots of mine, my mother-in-law and wife meet me with radiant faces, and the former says: 'My dear son-in-law, we have a delightful programme for to-day.' 'Oh, perfectly delightful,' echoes my charming wife. 'We'll go to the concert this afternoon.' 'Yes, Patti sings to-day.' 'And in the evening we'll have a reception and a dance.' 'Hurry with your breakfast, dear hubby, and then we'll rehearse the minuet.' Everything grows dark before my eyes, and my coffee tastes to me as bitter as morphia. 'It will be delightful, my dear son-in-law,' says my mother-in-law, beaming with joy. 'It will be perfectly charming, my dear little hubby,' echoes my fascinating Ida, dancing in ecstatic joy. I then assume the bearing of a master of the house, wrinkle my forehead a little, and explain to them, from the stand-point of a physician, that this eternally restless life of enjoyment affects one's health seriously, that my mother-in-law is already suffering from it, and that to my wife it may even become dangerous, especially since she may be ——. But my mother-in-law only looks at me with a partly mocking and partly indifferent smile, and says, repellantly: 'Oh, please don't let us think of such things yet!'"

The privy counsellor was silent for a while, and then woefully said:

"You have no idea how that annoys me."

"Oh, yes, I believe you," replied Rarrer, almost as woefully.

The doctor looked at him sharply, but embarrassingly, and then continued with his confession :

"When I succeed in recovering my forces after this preliminary and unsuccessful skirmish, I give in so far as to attend the concert, but protest seriously against dancing in the evening because it affords me no pleasure. 'But I can't conceive how one is unable to derive pleasure from dancing!' shoots off my mother-in-law. 'Neither can I, my dear hubby!' chimes in my little wife. Well, shall I go on with this picture? A little scene takes place, everyone loses her or his temper, and, in order to avoid a period of anger that may last several days, I, of course, give in to everything. This is the final result one time as another."

Rarrer became thoughtful.

"Still, you haven't told me why you bwought youah slippahs with you," he began, after a while.

"I should think you would be able to answer that question yourself, from what I have just told you," returned the privy counsellor. "The incessant wearing of tight and hot patent-leather boots is enough to drive one to distraction, and having with indescribable toil and trouble brought it so far that my ladies should hold a ladies' reception one evening in the week, which I need not participate in, I avail myself of this happy evening to enjoy comfort here which I have renounced at home; that is to say, I put my tortured feet in slippers and smoke seven cigars one after the other, because my wife and mother-in-law are unable to see how smoking can afford one any pleasure."

Rarrer became still more thoughtful.

"However, Madame Baldrian is chiefly to blame for my misfortune," continued Dr. Staberow, after a pause. "Had she not urged me on, I would never have carried out a not very firmly resolved intention."

"Evevywheh one heahs the name of Madame Baldwian!" muttered Rarrer to himself.

"Yes, poor Frohberg can sing a similar song," said the privy counsellor with a bitter smile, "and now she is busy with machinations at the Commercial Counsellor Miller in Charlottenburg. I'd be very sorry indeed if she should succeed in her plans there of making that good Miller and his charming daughters unhappy for life."

"And the seventy-yeah-old Majoh W—W—Wumpel," added Rarrer. "Isn't it a wevitable act of deviltwy to tie that honowable old wawioh to his cook!"

"My dear friend, I can show you a hundred similar instances," replied the doctor. "Whereever you look you will find a pair that was brought together by that woman, a marriage which she instigated. And almost every one of them is an unhappy marriage, either openly or secretly, for even when appearances seem to be perfectly pleasant, if you look deeper you will see the worm. I do not mean to convey thereby that other marriages are not equally unhappy. These, however, were entered into by the parties with their free will and eyes open. Madame Baldrian contrives to arrange things just as she pleases, without caring whether the parties harmonize and sympathize with each other; without caring what horrible results will follow from such careless combinations. She is actuated by a maniacal passion to bring about acquaintances and to form marriages, and since the number of collaborators and interested persons that flock to her side is uncountable, I consider her one of the most dangerous beings to the State, a secret poison that destroys the peace and happiness of families, a cancer of society, but which, unfortunately, cannot be removed by law."

Some very active thoughts seemed to be passing through Rarrer's mind, for in a moment his eye glistened and his hands clinched as if he had resolved upon some heroic act, only to be followed by an inexpressible shade of pain, sorrow, and anger that spread over his countenance.

"What is the matter with you, Rarrer?" asked the doctor, gazing upon him in alarm.

"'Of what use is it foh cweatuhs like me to cwawl about between heaven and earth?'" muttered he, with pale lips, gazing away off gloomily.

Staberow, in spite of himself, was obliged to laugh.

"You have drunk too much porter, Rarrer," said he.

"Oh, no," returned Rarrer, looking up. "I could dwink moah yet, foh I am so thihsty that my tongue cleaves to the woof of my mouth."

"Then why do you mutter such nonsense?" continued the privy counsellor.

"It is not nonsense; it is a quotation fwom Hamlet!" replied the young man, whose head, after all, did seem to be somewhat affected by the strong porter.

"I know that very well," said the doctor; "but I can't conceive how you come to quote Hamlet just now, and especially that passage."

"I am in a situation somewhat similah to that of the melancholy Pwince of Denmahk," declared Rarrer. "It is twue no fatheh of mine was tweachwously muhdehed, by having poison instilled into his eah; but, like Hamlet, I am uhged on to do a deed, and, like him, I delay to pehfohm it."

Staberow smiled, and asked:

"And what is that deed? You do not think of killing anyone, do you?"

Rarrer gazed at him, gloomily frightened.

"'Of what use is it foh cweatuhs like me to cwawl about between heaven and earth?'" he repeated, declaiming tragically. "I am an unfohtunate fellow who nevah enjoys any pleasah, but suffehs vewy much. It is not likely that any good luck will evah befall me, foh I am not destined to have any in life. 'I am cuhtailed by natuh of my pwopeh pwopohtion,' as Wichahd the Thihd expwesses himself."

"Who?" inquired Staberow, curiously.

Rarrer gazed upon him with a look that was almost threatening.

"King Wichahd the Thihd!" he squeezed out from between his lips. "Why do you intewupt me so often?"

"Pray excuse me," returned the privy counsellor, bowing suavely.

"I don't know now wheah I was," said Rarrer, sadly.

"'Nature has curtailed you of your proper proportions,' as Richard the Third expresses himself," the privy counsellor reminded him.

"W-wight!" said Rarrer; "that is to say, I am not minus a leg but only a boot, but I am widiculous, and that is wohse than being a cwipple. I cannot put my nose out of doohs without a swallow that happens to fly by, oh a spawow that is sitting upon a twee, leaves a wemembwance upon it. My whole life is an endless sewies of annoyances and accidents. My life is uttehly wohthless. I must, thehfoh, make use of it foh the puhpose of sehwing others."

"Whom, for instance?" asked Dr. Staberow.

"Society!" replied the youth, with increasing animation. "I'll offeh myself up as a mahteh for the sake of society, for the puhpose of bwinging it luck, and of fweeing it fwom an evil spiwit."

"You do not intend to cause yourself to be

burned at the stake, do you?" smilingly asked Staberow.

Rarrer cast upon him a still more angry look.

"Don't talk foolish!" said he, with a gravity that was unusual for him. "I do not intend to sacwifice myself in any such mannah at all, but in a way that is nobleh and gwandeh, like a twue mahteh."

"You don't intend to have yourself flayed alive, do you?" asked the privy counsellor, with a peculiar twinkle in his eye.

"No," answered the young man. "I only know that I'll do something, but what it is is not yet quite cleah to me. But something must be done!" he added, with increasing ecstasy, getting up from his seat and beginning to limp up and down the room, with long strides, so that the old spur resounded through the quiet, semi-darkened room, with a ghost-like scraping whirr. "Something must be done. I am uhged on to it by a powah within me to which I was hithehto a stwangeh."

"That's the porter, double stout," said the privy counsellor sarcastically.

Rarrer, however, could not be deterred by the malevolent remarks of his scoffing friend, but with dark, sinister looks and glowing cheeks declaimed fragments from Hamlet's well-known monologue:

"Yet I,
A dull and muddy mettled wascal, peak,
Like John a-dweams, unpwegnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not foh a king,
Upon whose pwopehty, and most deah life,
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a cowahd?
Who calls me villain? bweaks my pate acwoss?
I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall,
Wemohseless, tweachewous, lechewous kindless villain!"

"Upon my word, Rarrer, you are drunk!" said the privy counsellor; "go home and go to bed!"

"Unpoetic man!" continued the youth, flaring up still more. "To be suah, you cannot compwehend the deep twuth contained in the wohds of the immohtal bahd." And then he added:

"Oh, what an ass am I!"

"Oh, how true!" exclaimed the doctor, looking puzzled and amused.

Rarrer stopped and looked at him with big eyes. After gazing at him for some time he strode toward him with pathetic steps, laid a hand in a dignified and prophetic manner upon his shoulder, and in a mysterious tone of voice said:

"You will live to see it!"

"Live to see what?" asked Staberow. "The truth of what you just said?"

"You will live to see it!" repeated Rarrer, with like gloomy pathos. "Twue, I cannot welease you and many othehs from youh thwaldom, but many, many shall be wescued in the futuh fwom a tewible fate!"

"Noble youth!" said the doctor, blinking with his eyes as if he wanted to squeeze out a tear. "Promise me at least that you will not sacrifice yourself in a too horrible manner—no burning yourself alive at the stake, do you hear? No flaying alive! No dagger! No poison!"

Barely had he uttered the last two words, when Rarrer's face contracted painfully and he pressed his hands over his stomach.

"What is the matter with you, Rarrer?" exclaimed Dr. Staberow. "Have you already executed your wild threat? Speak, young man, I conjure you!"

"Oh!" groaned the youth, drawing up his cavalry foot in the air.

"You have taken poison, hey?" exclaimed the

privy counsellor. "You must drink milk instantly, a large quantity of milk!"

He immediately started for the door to call the waiter.

"Hold!" cried Rarrer, overtaking him with two hasty strides, and holding him back by his coat-tails.

"Milk, milk! you must drink milk, do you hear?" cried the doctor, seeking to release himself.

"No!" vociferated Rarrer. "I have dwank enough milk at Majoh W—W—Wumpel's alweady, to my gweat misfohtune."

"What is your great misfortune?" asked Staberow, anxiously.

"The milk and the pohteh do not agwee!" said the young man, drawing up, for a change, the infantry foot now.

"Oh, I see!" smirked the doctor, who was again full of Mephistophelian humor. "Well, sit down and let us talk a little; perhaps the milk and the porter will come to an amicable uuderstanding."

"No!" groaned Rarrer. "I must get out. I must leave you!"

As soon as he got momentary release by a cessation of the cramp, he pulled the bell-cord as if he intended to tear it from its fastening, bringing the waiter into the room quite lively.

"My bill!" cried Rarrer, as soon as the latter appeared.

"Three beefsteaks with potatoes and three bottles of porter, one dollar and sixty cents," calculated the attendant, in sad tones.

Rarrer, like one in despair, hunted for the proper amount in his pockets, while the privy counsellor, sighing, took off his warm, and comfortable slippers and squeezed his feet into the tight patent leather boots with a prolonged groan.

"My usual ill-luck," he muttered, sotto voce.

"I neveh have change about me. The smallest I have now is a V. Theah!" said he, handing it to the waiter.

The waiter searched in his pockets, while Rarrer seemed to be standing on hot coals, and finally said, in his soft, smooth voice:

"Have you no change?"

"If I had I would have given it to you!" angrily cried Rarrer.

"Then you will have to wait a few minutes till I change this," said the waiter, and then he went out at the door into the passage.

"Say!" cried Rarrer, suddenly, who had continued to search in his pockets.

The waiter stopped.

"You needn't mind changing it," said Rarrer, who found six quarters in various pockets of his garments.

The waiter at first looked very much surprised, then his countenance became irradiated, and with overflowing gratitude, said:

"I am exceedingly thankful to you, sir!"

"Cawambo!" cried Rarrer. "No, sah! That was not what I meant. Give me back my five dollah bill," he added, rushing after the waiter, who had already left the passage, and had not heard his last statement.

"Oh!" he groaned, "I must let the money go; I haven't any time."

"Won't you shake hands with me, and bid me good-night before you go?" called the privy counsellor after him.

"No!" returned Rarrer, stumping down the stairs with his rasping, clanging cavalry boot. "No, I haven't time!"

And away he went, plunging into the dark night which had been so very disagreeable to him.

The doctor, too, started away soon afterward for his home, where his mother-in-law and his wife awaited him in order to surprise him with some new amusement which they had planned for the next day.

CHAPTER XIV.

A REMINISCENCE OF OSTEND.

Privy Counsellor Dr. Staberow gave a great ball. The *salon* and all the other rooms were brilliantly lit up, and beautifully decorated with flowers and tropical plants, and a soft, warm, and fragrant atmosphere streamed through the different apartments.

In the principal reception-room the doctor, as host, stood ready to receive his guests, greeting the gentlemen with a socially warm squeeze of the hand, and the ladies with a profound bow and an agreeable remark.

The doctor, however, did not stand in the middle of the room, as hosts usually do, and rub his hands complacently, but was seated, because his patent leather boots were too tight for him, and they pained him. In an adjoining parlor, on the way to the dancing-room, were his wife and mother-in-law, who seemed to be perfectly happy, and every now and then they cast a look into the large plate-glass mirror for the purpose of reviewing and admiring their toilette.

Every two or three minutes the mother-in-law would put her head into the ante-chamber and call out in a not very pleasant and surprised tone of voice:

"I declare, my dear dear son-in-law, you are sitting down again!"

And every time the dear son-in-law was caught sitting down, and thus reminded of his neglect of

duty, he would start and jump up as if some one had thrust a dagger into him. But no sooner had the mother-in-law drawn back her head into the second room, when the poor privy counsellor would sit down again.

Thus quite a long while passed before the guests began to arrive.

The mothers, draped in heavy silk garments, rustle on in advance, the beautiful feathers in their hair undulating gracefully, sweet smiles hovering around their lips, dangling chains hanging upon their voluptuous necks, and their persons diffusing an intoxicating aroma around them.

Behind them came, treading gingerly, their little daughters, whose pretty figures were robed in the customary innocent white fabrics of the ball-room. the wasp-like waist decorated with a beautiful bouquet, a blushing red rose or a languishing white one in their hair, neck, breast, and arms, with no other ornaments than those which nature endowed them with, and surrounding them there hovered an aroma which only youth and beauty is at all times capable of diffusing.

And bringing up the rear, came the father, the author of their existence, dressed in sober black coat and trousers, and glossy white vest and tie. In his buttonhole a bit of ribbon of an order might be seen, partly hidden, which he had received for some kind of service to his country and to his own benefit; upon his countenance there hovered a pleasant smile, that only appeared there at the moment he took off his *paletot* in the cloak-room and put on the cream-colored kid-gloves that but recently returned from the cleaning establishment; and, from the aroma which he disseminated, a not entirely occluded nasal organ might easily perceive that he had thrown away a cigar stump just as he reached the

front door, and that in his left breast-pocket a plethoric snuff-box was stowed away.

As soon as a mamma rustled into the room, Dr. Staberow seized her arm, and conducted her to his wife and mother-in-law in the second room, where a perfect flood of greetings was poured out, followed by the interchange of the latest scandal that had occurred in their set. The little daughters then formed groups by themselves, or straightway betake themselves to their "happy hunting ground"—the dance hall—where they seek to capture prizes of the opposite sex, and interchange the most important event that has happened to their friends; and the fathers, after having delivered a few stiff compliments, returned to the first room, where they bored one another to death, wandered about aimlessly, and suffered from tediousness to a degree; while the young gentlemen, with their goodly-sized dancing organs encased in the regulation patent leather pumps, and their hair dressed so as to hide the nakedness of the skull and the emptiness within it, fluttered around the white and red roses, who, sooner or later, opened their calixes to them.

Ere long the music strikes up a prelude to the dance, the engaged couples flutter to their places, and life is infused into the scene, and the different figures of the polonaise are gone through with.

Then follow other dances. The little feet and the big feet tread quickly; the dresses fly; the gay sashes of the young ladies ensnare both dancers as with an affectionate love-band; the glances become more free; the cheeks glow; the bosoms heave; the brains reel; the red and white roses tremble and encourage the young gentlemen; and the hearts flutter and yearn, and open themselves so far—so far——

Let us roam about for a little while through the

different rooms; let us approach the various groups, and listen to their conversation, and divine their thoughts.

Being invisible, we can easily indulge in these delights.

"Really, this is a most delightful ball which you are giving," said Herr von Frohberg, approaching Privy Counsellor Staberow, who, after the labors of giving general introductions, withdrew to the recess of a window, and alternately raised up one foot and then the other.

"You think so?" returned Staberow, making a terrible effort to smile and look gratified.

"Yes, without flattery, old friend," continued Frohberg. "You display a degree of luxury, and make a glittering show which I never expected of you—you especially, pardon me for saying it—who always professed such diametrically opposite principles and inclinations. Do you remember?"

The doctor sighed.

"You must spend a nice sum of money now," went on Frohberg, allowing his gaze to wander about the elegantly appointed room. "I know what such things cost."

The doctor sighed again.

"But besides that, the danger to the health, my dear friend," spoke Herr von Frohberg, further. "Really, you seem to be utterly regardless of your health now. I never would have expected it of you. This continual pleasure and social life does not agree with your wife at all. That's quite apparent to me too. I wonder you, as a physician, don't see it."

"I see it well enough, but what can I do?" said the privy counsellor, helplessly shrugging his shoulders.

"What can you do?" zealously said Frohberg.

"That's a strange question. When you see that this Berlin life of pleasure is not good for your wife, you ought to go into the country with her; that is your duty as a man and husband."

"It is easy for you to say that," replied the privy counsellor. "The air of Berlin does not agree with your wife either, and yet you brought her back here."

A shade of grief passed over Frohberg's usually serene countenance.

"The Italian air agrees with her still less," returned he. "What can we do?"

The privy counsellor made a face like a lambkin.

"What can we do?" asked he, laying his hand upon Frohberg's shoulder. "What we have done till now, old friend: do as our wives want us to, so that we may live long upon this earth. However, I must make a tour of duty through my company now," he added, after a brief pause, with a painful effort and heroic resolution, rising from his seat. "If you will look me up here in about half an hour, I'll be very much pleased."

Thus saying, he crowded his feet entirely into his tight patent leather boots, which he had partly slipped off, and was just in the act of leaving the embrasure of the window, when a heavy silk dress rustled against him, and a voice, which he knew but too well, sounded in his ear:

"Why, my dear privy counsellor," said Madame Baldrian, in her dulcet voice, "what shall I think of you? Is it in this way you do the *honneurs* of the host? The whole world is asking for the host, and here he is hidden in the recess of a window."

"I am coming, I am coming!" said Dr. Staberow, somewhat unwillingly.

"Do you know, my dear doctor," continued the match-maker, detaining him, "that your wife makes

a charming hostess. She understands how to manage an establishment like a countess. Really you don't deserve to have such a wife, you don't understand how to prize such a jewel."

"Pardon me, my dear Madame Baldrian," said Staberow, "my duties as host make it necessary for me, to my great regret, to leave you."

The matrimonial agent measured him with a peculiarly deprecating look.

"Evidently you have already forgotten, Herr Privy Counsellor," said she, sharply, "that you are indebted to me for your happiness."

"Pardon me!" returned the doctor. "I'll never forget all that I am indebted to you for."

"And for your fortune too!" continued the lady, casting another sharp glance upon him. "Ida brought you a nice dower!"

"Of what good is it to me?" burst out the privy counsellor. "It has only been used to provide me with trouble and annoyances, and a very high price has been paid for them too, I can tell you. So much so that I am not only not benefited by the money she brought me, but I have to spend a good deal of my own."

"Ungrateful man!" said the instigatoress of marriages. "I pity you!"

"Then we are both engaged in the same occupation," returned her former matrimonial candidate.

"And that is?"

"I too pity myself, very deeply," exclaimed Dr. Staberow, angrily. "But I am going to adopt another course," he added, becoming heated and excited. "I am going to exercise the authority which I legally possess; I am going to put an end to this wasteful, profligate, and senseless life; I'll resist to the utmost the sway of this female rule, to which only a slave submits."

As the privy counsellor uttered these words, breathing fire and his eyes flashing, he stood there resembling an angry god wrathfully shaking his locks. The apostle of matrimony manifested the utmost surprise; she opened her eyes to their fullest extent, being totally at a loss what to make of it, because she had never seen the weak Staberow so wrought up before.

Just then a slim little dancer, with panting breath and his blond hair flying behind him, came running up to them and said:

"Please, Herr Privy Counsellor, your mother-in-law requests you to come to her instantly."

The privy counsellor was startled, but he did not stir, he remained standing like an angry god.

Gradually, however, the energy and the spirit that had puffed him up so began to ooze out of him, his body collapsed somewhat, his arms hung down impotently by his side, the noble fire in his eyes died out, and he turned so suddenly to obey the summons of his good mother-in-law that he collided with a gentleman who had been blowing his hot tea for the purpose of cooling it a little.

"Pardon me!" said Staberow, and he was about to move on.

"Excuse *me!*" responded the gentleman, blowing upon his hand now instead of the tea. "I only scalded my hand a little with the hot tea. It is of no consequence."

"What, is that you, my dear Rarrer?" asked Staberow, for the first time recognizing the young man.

"Yes, it is I," replied Rarrer. "Since you weah so kind as to invite me, I have the pleasah of being heah. Youh ball is pehfectly gwand."

"You think so?" said the doctor. "I hope you are enjoying yourself."

"Yes, vevy well indeed!" returned the young man, still blowing upon his hand, which already presented a blistered appearance.

"I haven't seen you for a long time—not since that evening we met in the Café, where you ate and drank so much—do you remember?"

Rarrer's spirit seemed to become overcast by a dark shadow.

"Those horrible intentions of self-sacrifice—you have given them up, I hope?"

Rarrer's countenance instantly assumed the demoniacal expression which we observed on that occasion.

"Herr Privy Counsellor," this gentleman heard the dulcet tones of the slim little dancer with the blond hair say a second time, just then, "your mother-in-law requests——"

The privy counsellor started as if he had been caught in some grave sin of omission. He did not permit the blond dancer to finish his message, but hurried off, winding his way through the crowd like a snake.

Madame Baldrian had observed the entire scene with her eagle eye. And when she saw the doctor obediently and hastily comply with his mother-in-law's request, the expression of her face underwent a change, and a bright triumphant flame of joy blazed up from the ashes of her surprise and astonishment.

Just then her gaze encountered that of Rarrer. At first she was frightened at beholding that malevolent pair of eyes of his riveted upon her. After a while she seemed to be trying to recall to mind where she had seen him, but being unable apparently to do so, she turned to Herr von Frohberg and entered into a prolonged conversation with him.

Rarrer stalked along like a dark shadow, muttering to himself:

"Yet I,
A dull and muddy mettled wascal, peak,
Like John a-dweams, unpwegnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not foh a king,
Upon whose pwopehty and most deah life,
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a cowahd?
Who calls me villain? bweaks my pate acwoss?"

On he stalked, thus muttering to himself, like a gloomy spirit, till he felt something jerking beneath his feet. He stood still and felt the jerking repeated.

"Excuse me, you are treading upon my dress!" he heard a charming voice say, close to him.

Rarrer raised up his eyes and beheld a ravishing creature, beseechingly gazing up at him over her shoulder, and slightly bending to avoid having her robe torn.

"I beg youh pahdon a thousand times!" cried the unfortunate youth, becoming dreadfully embarrassed, and, with a backward bound, releasing the young lady.

"Excuse me, you are treading upon my dress!" he again heard someone say close to him; and as he looked around he beheld another ravishing creature gazing up at him beseechingly over her shoulder, to avoid having her robe torn.

"I beg youh pahdon a thousand times!" Rarrer managed to stammer out again, his face livid and drops of perspiration trickling down his forehead from embarrassment, jumping backward a second time, thereby releasing the young lady's garment; but in coming down upon the highly polished floor his feet slipped, and as, horrified, he saw that he was in danger of falling upon the lap of a corpulent elderly dame, he instinctively reached out with his

hands in the hope of grasping something whereby he might save himself from such a calamity.

"Oh! thunder and lightning!" exclaimed a deep rough voice. "Let go my whiskers! You are pulling my hair out! *Potstausendsacrament!*"

On regaining his equilibrium, Rarrer looked around and beheld, to his dismay, that he had clutched at Major Rumpel's side-whiskers, and whose mouth had thereby been completely pulled out of shape.

"In the name of all the furies!" cried the major, when Rarrer had released him, "must some calamity happen to me whenever I meet you? I wish you would avoid me entirely!"

"I beg youah pahdon a thousand times, Hevv Majoh W—W—Wumpel," stuttered the young man. "I accidentally twod upon a lady's dwess, and in jumping off it I slipped."

"And saved yourself from falling by seizing hold of my side-whiskers," interrupted the major. "But then, you are a man of remarkable habits, and consequently one must not be so particular with you."

Rarrer was overjoyed at getting off so cheaply from his latest encounter with the old warrior, and in order to divert the latter's mind from it he asked, with much concern:

"May I take the libehty to inquiah how youah health is, my deah Hevv Majoh?"

"Well," replied Rumpel, stroking his side-whiskers, "you might easily imagine how it is."

Rarrer made a face as if he would like to contradict him if he dared.

"I have been married a week now," added the major. "You know how that affair came about."

"After all!" observed Rarrer, looking sheepish.

"Well, yes," said the major. "One must always keep his promise, come what may!"

Rarrer became embarrassed, being unable to decide how to act in reference to this fact, and asked, because he felt that it was incumbent upon him to ask or to say something:

"I twust it has agweed well with you?"

Rumpel gazed upon him with a peculiarly sharp look.

"Why should it not agree with me?" he cried, rolling his eyes and twisting his coal-black dyed mustache.

Rarrer now became still more embarrassed.

"Oh, I meant—that—that—" he stammered.

"Ah, yes, you mean in reference to the temper of my cook—I would say my wife," returned Rumpel. "It is vastly better now. Since she has become my wife she annoys me much less than formerly; and if she does it from sheer habit once in a while, I am not as affected by it as I used to be. Having married her, I have acquired the privilege of submitting to her tyranny."

The major now suddenly interrupted himself, turned slightly pale, and stared at a certain spot in the crowd.

"Excuse me!" he said, somewhat embarrassed, turning to the young man. "I think my wife wishes to see me. I see her motioning at me. Most probably she wants me to get her something from the *buffet*."

Rarrer followed the gaze of the major, and soon discovered the red, angry face of the stout Augusta, dressed in a costly silk robe, and who kept on telegraphing very energetically with her right arm to her husband.

"That's what the unhappy man calls motioning at him," mentally said Rarrer. "The good old man is to be pitied, but he beahs his misfovtune like a hewo! I'll do something that will console

his spivit." Then he grasped the major's arm, and cried into his ear: "I'll wevenge you, Hevv Majoh!"

"What will you do to me?" asked Rumpel, surprised.

Rarrer compressed his windpipe, and fiercely uttered: "I'll w-wevenge, w-wevenge you!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the major; "but upon whom do you intend to revenge me?"

"On Madame Baldvian!" cried the young man into Rumpel's ear. "I have a plan wheby I'll make heh hahmless to society!"

The major looked, horrified, at Rarrer, and anxiously and in trepidation at his wife, who again telegraphed to him with her massive arm, but fiercely and more threateningly than before.

"Young man, you don't intend to——" he asked, in a low voice.

"Yes, I will!" Rarrer replied, vehemently.

"Think of what you are doing," said the old man, ready to dart away. "You are of an excitable, nervous temperament, and have strange ideas. Don't let your passions lead you into committing a rash act."

"West easy, my deah majoh!" said Rarrer, with a beaming countenance. "She shall sow no moah misfovtunes; I'll make heh hahmless!"

Major Rumpel, who had so often looked death in the face, turned pale at Rarrer's dark hints, and was about to caution him once more, when his gaze again fell upon his wife, who made gestures denoting that she would presently come and fetch him.

"Fare you well, young man!" he said, in a low voice, impressively. "I beseech you not to commit any rash act!"

And, anxious and excited to the highest degree, he forced his way through the crowded room to join his wife.

Rarrer, his eyes glistening, betook himself to the *buffet*, and drank two glasses of punch to prevent his hot resolution from growing cold.

Madame Baldrian, meanwhile, had been calmly conversing with Herr von Frohberg, without having the least idea in what way her life and future had just been resolved upon.

Thus a person will often pluck flowers from the brink of his own grave, without knowing it.

Suddenly Madame Baldrian espied, at the other end of the room, Government Solicitor von Collin, who seemed to have but just arrived, and whose gaze wandered through the crowd of people as if he was seeking somebody.

The matrimonial agent's countenance suddenly became illuminated with the rays of joy.

"Excuse me, my dear friend," she said, quickly extending her finely gloved hand to von Frohberg; "I see an acquaintance of mine over there whom I wish to talk to. Farewell for the present!"

She quickly started off, rushing through the crowded room as fast as she could, steering directly towards Herr von Collin.

"Is that you, my friend? and how do you happen to get here?" she began, as soon as she got within talking distance of him. "I was not aware that you were acquainted here. You must have been introduced quite recently."

"Yes, quite recently," returned the barrister. "I heard so much about these balls that I resolved to attend one."

Madame Baldrian threatened him jestingly with her fan.

"Why, this is the first ball ever given by the privy counsellor," she whispered to him; "but if you are still uncertain of your own feelings, shall I tell

you why you are here? Because you know that Fräulein Wanda Miller is here to-night."

The government solicitor blushed. But he who is yet capable of blushing still has a heart, though it may be encrusted with the rind of selfishness.

"Come, now, confess, isn't it so?" queried the match-maker, who had perceived him blushing.

"Well, then, yes!" returned Herr von Collin, who inwardly seemed to be battling with conflicting emotions. "I am here because of the reason you mentioned. I have become unfaithful to my principles, but I cannot help it, I am caught. I have tried my best to put my theory into practice, for I deemed it very good; I wanted to run away, but I was unable to do it. Indeed," the young man continued, warmly, "I constantly seek opportunities to see her, to speak to her; in one word—I am caught!"

The matrimonial missionary cast a triumphant look upon her convert.

"And has love made you somewhat more sensible in regard to the amount?" she asked.

"Yes," replied the barrister, though with a slightly heavy heart. "Since it turns out to be a marriage of love, I'll forego the twenty thousand dollars and content myself with eighty thousand."

"You are charming!" exclaimed the matrimonial agent, joyfully.

Collin made an unhappy face.

"No, I am foolish," he returned. "But it isn't my fault. Why is she so beautiful?"

The match-maker blissfully rubbed her hands.

"Then I may broach the matter to-night?" she asked.

"Yes, if you will be so kind," Collin replied, sighing almost comically.

"There comes Papa Miller with his two daughters!" suddenly cried the apostle of matrimony,

starting for the door, through which the parties alluded to had just entered.

Herr von Collin followed in her wake, and forthwith addressed himself to Wanda, who glowed in all the loveliness of beautiful girlhood.

"May I beg for the pleasure of the first dance to-night?" he asked, shyly.

Wanda replied with a pleasant nod of the head.

"Ah!" said the marriage instigator, not a little surprised. "You are already known to each other? I was just about to introduce you."

"Yes, yes, we have had that pleasure," remarked the little commercial counsellor, whose face was not as happy nor as bright as usual. "Recently, at the Court Physician Schwangelmeier, and at—at——"

At this point his thoughts wandered away from the subject under consideration, and seemed to be centered about some dark affair, which to-night apparently occupied his mind exclusively.

Meanwhile Herr von Collin had entered into a low, but very lively, conversation with Fräulein Wanda, who seemed to derive a great deal of pleasure from it, for her eyes sparkled delightfully, as if nothing but spring and sunshine was in her heart.

Madame Baldrian, who had entered into a conversation with Louisa, watched the young pair with beaming eyes and a joyful countenance, and little Papa Miller, with his hands crossed over his stomach, stood with downcast eyes staring at the floor.

At that moment the music struck up the prelude to a dance.

Herr von Collin offered Wanda his arm, in which she smilingly placed her own, and in the next moment they disappeared in the crowd on their way to the dancing-room, after casting another blissful glance upon his patroness, who, with little Miller and Louisa, remained behind.

For a long while Madame Baldrian watched little Commercial Counsellor Miller's strange manner.

"Tell me, my dear friend, what ails you?" she said, addressing the little papa. "You look awfully gloomy to-night!"

Little Miller started up from his dreams, blankly stared at Madame Baldrian, and, like one who does not know what he is speaking about, asked:

"How so, my dear madame?"

The matrimonial agent smiled.

"Yes, that's what I would like to know, too!" she said. "Has anything happened to you to put you in such bad spirits?"

"Oh!" returned Herr Miller, passing his hand across his forehead, as if to wipe away some unpleasant thoughts from his mind, "it is nothing; only a slight headache. Let us speak no more about it."

He then tried to appear pleasant and cheerful, but did not succeed very well.

"Did not your wife come along with you?" asked the match-maker, further.

Instantly a shade passed over the fat countenance of the commercial counsellor again.

"My wife?" he repeated, as if again reminded of an unpleasant subject. "What a question!"

"What do you mean by that?" inquired the instigator of marriages, looking inquisitively.

Papa Miller cast an anxious and surreptitious glance upon his daughter Louisa, winked at the matrimonial missionary out of the corners of one eye, gently plucked at her dress, and whispered in her ear:

"Don't ask; I'll tell you all about it some other time!"

"But I have something to tell you now," whispered Madame Baldrian. "It is a matter of great importance."

The commercial counsellor sighed mournfully.

"Oh, spare me with matters of great importance to-night!" begged the little papa. "I am totally unable to collect my thoughts now."

At this moment the legation counsellor came up to Louisa and invited her to dance a quadrille with him.

The commercial counsellor paid no attention to it. Louisa, agreeably surprised, put her arm into that of the legation counsellor, and Madame Baldrian jestingly threatened the departing gentleman with a finger:

"Why, my good legation counsellor, what's got into *you* to-day? I thought you did not dance?"

However, as the pair disappeared without taking any notice of her, she seized the commercial counsellor by the arm and whispered to him:

"Come over to that half-darkened window recess! I have good news to tell you!"

Papa Miller sighed once more from the very bottom of his heart, and helplessly allowed himself to be dragged to the spot indicated by Madame Baldrian.

"Herr von Collin is desperately in love with Wanda!" began the matrimonial agent, as soon as she found that they were somewhat isolated from the rest of the company.

Papa Miller turned up his nose and made a motion with his hand as if he didn't deem the matter of any importance.

"He is satisfied with eighty thousand!" the match-maker whispered, further.

Papa Miller turned up his nose still more, and made a still faster motion with his hand.

Madame Baldrian looked at him in astonishment.

"What do you mean with those gestures of yours?" she said, somewhat annoyed.

"Who talks of eighty thousand!" murmured little Miller, making a quick motion with his hand, as if he was playing on his ear for a jewsharp.

"Are you disposed not to give that amount either?" continued Madame Baldrian, becoming serious.

"What has one's disposition to do with it?" muttered little Miller, casting a peculiar side glance upon the agent.

"I don't understand you!" said the latter, coldly.

"I can't give so much, now!" whispered Papa Miller, further.

"Have you suffered any losses?" inquired the lady, with evident concern.

"None whatever!" returned the little commercial counsellor. "I might, in fact, say I have gained; but yet I am not now able to give each of my daughters eighty thousand, although I have a fortune of three hundred thousand dollars. I must keep something for myself to live upon!"

"Well, I thought ——" interjected the match-maker.

"Don't think my dear friend, for you are apt to be wrong," quickly interrupted the commercial counsellor. "If I tell you I can't, then I can't, and I have a good reason for it!" he added.

Madame Baldrian's face denoted the utmost astonishment.

"But, heavens, how did that happen?" she asked.

The commercial counsellor drew up his shoulders as high as he could, and with the utmost assurance said:

"I do not know, my dear friend, how it happened, but that it *has* happened, is a fact!"

"And to what sum have you reduced us now?" asked the matrimonial negotiator, in a low voice.

"You may figure it out for yourself, my dear madame!" replied the commercial counsellor. "I have three hundred thousand dollars, the half of which I must reserve to myself, and the other half, about one hundred and fifty thousand, is to be divided for three."

"For two!" corrected the conjugal schemer.

"Excuse me, for three!" reasserted little Miller. "That is the d—l of it. Thus, about fifty thousand dollars for each!"

Madame Baldrian's face bore an expression as if she had been struck by lightning.

"What! is it possible?" she exclaimed.

Little Miller nodded proudly but somewhat sadly.

"The illness of your wife is then——" went on Madame Baldrian.

The commercial counsellor nodded.

"Who would have thought it!" said the match-maker.

"Not I!" sighed Papa Miller.

"On the whole, I congratulate you!" added Madame Baldrian.

"Thanks!" said Papa Miller, pressing the offered hand in his.

A pause ensued, during which both were occupied with their own thoughts.

"I am totally unable to explain the matter!" began the marriage mediator, again.

The commercial counsellor looked up from his dreams.

"The sea-baths at Ostend do wonderful things!" he said, in tones of deep conviction.

"You don't say so?" remarked the matrimonial missionary.

"Don't you go to Ostend, my dear friend," proceeded the commercial counsellor. "It is dangerous for one of our age to go there!"

Madame Baldrian looked up, offended.

"I beg your pardon, a thousand times!" the little papa said, correcting himself, greatly embarrassed. "I had forgotten entirely that you—pray don't be offended!"

And then, in order to regain the good will of his friend, he placed two chairs close together and was soon engaged in a lively and cheerful conversation with her, that seemed to have no end.

Let them gossip on. We can very well conceive what they are talking about.

CHAPTER XV.

A COLD STROKE.

Legation Counsellor von Frohberg had danced three dances with Fräulein Louisa, and the commercial counsellor still sat with Madame Baldrian in their half-darkened window recess, when the music of a quadrille ceased, and the gentlemen brought the young ladies back to their parents.

Madame Baldrian seemed to await the return of the now somewhat impatient Solicitor von Collin with some anxiety, for after the information which little Miller had just imparted to her, she could not go on with the matter till she had informed the solicitor of the reduction that had again been made in the prospective dowry.

Presently they returned, glowing with internal and external excitement, winding their way through the crowd like a pair of snakes.

While Wanda sat down upon a chair which the solicitor had placed near that of her father, he seated himself behind the manager of his matrimonial affairs and whispered to her:

"Well, how is it?"

The match-maker shrugged her shoulders.

"Heavens, is it not settled yet?" continued the barrister, with hot breath, but in a hoarse voice. "I am going to dance a mazurka with Fräulein Wanda now, please see to it meanwhile!"

Just then the orchestra struck up the prelude to a mazurka, Herr von Collin shot off his seat like a flash of lightning, with the intention of going to

Wanda for the purpose of leading her to the dancing-hall. As he passed Madame Baldrian, she stealthily and lightly pulled at his coat-tails, and whispered to him:

"I have something to say to you."

"Not now, not now," he whispered back, releasing himself from her hold, and with beaming countenance approached Wanda, who, with like beaming countenance stood waiting for him, and in the next minute, arm-in-arm, both disappeared among the assembled guests.

The matrimonial proctor and the commercial counsellor gazed after them as long as a fringe of Wanda's sash was visible.

"It's a pity!" thought Madame Baldrian. "That would have been one of my best *partis!*"

"It's a pity!" thought little Miller. "I like that young man very well; if he would only give up his habits of idleness!"

And when the mazurka was in full blast he turned to the lady and said:

"My dear madame, please inform the young man as speedily as possible how the matter stands, so that he could withdraw before his conduct to my daughter Wanda becomes noticeable."

Madame Baldrian bowed affirmatively.

"And in order that the same thing does not happen with Wanda and this young man that happened between Louisa and Baron Branco," went on Commercial Counsellor Miller. "That affair was kept up altogether too long—certainly not through any fault of yours, but by peculiar and unforeseen circumstances."

"I hope I don't intrude," they heard someone say pleasantly; and upon looking up they recognized the elder Frohberg, who was holding out a hand to each of them.

"By no means, my dear friend," Miller replied, pointing to the chair vacated by Wanda a little while before. "Sit with us a while; we have no secrets which we would keep from you."

Herr von Frohberg accepted the invitation.

"We were just talking of Herrn von Branco," said the commercial counsellor. "You know that affair of my daughter?"

"Yes!" replied von Frohberg, becoming serious. "It is still a mystery to me why Baron Branco withdrew, after the affair had gone so far."

"What?" cried the commercial counsellor; "the baron withdrew?"

"It is so reported everywhere," replied Frohberg; "and undoubtedly he was the originator of that report."

The commercial counsellor gazed at Madame Baldrian.

"Yes," remarked the latter, nodding her head seriously; "unfortunately that is true."

"And I hear of it only at this late day?" cried Miller, pale from anger.

Frohberg shrugged his shoulders.

"Those concerned in such affairs ascertain what is reported of them very late, or never!" said he, never supposing that this rule was also applicable to himself.

"But that is a shameful lie, an infamous slander!" cried the commercial counsellor hotly, rising from his seat. "The baron did not withdraw. I gave him to understand that he should retire."

"You did that?" asked Madame Baldrian, a little astonished.

"Well, when I say that, I mean that Herr von Frohberg did it by my authority," little Miller modified his statement.

"Who? my brother?" asked Frohberg, surprised,

also rising from his seat. "How did he come to do that?"

"Louisa asked him for his advice concerning the engagement," replied Miller, "and he afterward told me that no marriage could take place."

"Well, this is very interesting," interjected the matrimonial agent. "I never even had an intimation of this. And may one ask the reason why it was declared impossible for an engagement to take place?"

The commercial counsellor drew up his shoulders.

"It seems that Baron Branco had made certain promises to a married woman," he replied.

"P'st! not so loud!" whispered Madame Baldrian. "There is the baron just passing."

Both gentlemen looked in the direction indicated, and beheld the baron walking by with a lady upon his arm who was as yellow as saffron, and whose nose was more like the proboscis of a tapir than a human nasal organ.

"Who is the lady with him?" asked the commercial counsellor, in a whisper.

"Fräulein Silberstein," whispered the matchmaker, who knew everybody; "the daughter of the rich banker."

"But I can't understand," the older Frohberg began, after a brief pause, "how my brother Hermann happened to get mixed up in this affair?"

"I don't know either," returned Miller. "I can only say that Baron Branco claimed to be free from all entanglement, and yet he was under a pledge to some lady, who threatened to expose him if he engaged himself to another one. I asked Hermann if he was sure of it, and he told me that he had the proofs in his own hands."

"What was the proof?" asked the elder Frohberg.

"It was perfectly reliable proof!" answered the commercial counsellor. "A letter from the lady alluded to!"

"Did you read the letter?" Madame Baldrian threw in, with impatient inquisitiveness.

"No," said Miller. "It was only necessary for me to be convinced, and for that purpose Hermann's word was enough. But now, when the reputation of my daughter is in question, the matter is altogether different. I must have the proof!"

Just then Legation Counsellor von Frohberg joined the group.

"Excuse me, my dear Herr Miller," said he, addressing himself to the commercial counsellor, "for not bringing back Louisa to you. A gentleman robbed me of her, who under no circumstances would be denied the pleasure of dancing with her."

"It is well you came," returned the commercial counsellor forthwith, without taking any notice of what the legation counsellor had said. "You must give me that suspicious letter!"

The legation counsellor was somewhat startled, and threw a quick and surreptitious gaze upon his brother.

"First you must tell me, my dear Herr Miller," he then answered, "what you want it for."

The little commercial counsellor manifested an amount of energy which no one thought he possessed, and his round, globular form actually assumed a dignified bearing.

"For what do I want it?" he said. "To put down the false reports against my daughter, and to purify her reputation from apparent taint."

The legation counsellor shook his head.

"Louisa was never seriously compromised," he said.

"What do you mean by saying 'seriously?'"

continued Herr Miller, becoming red in the face. "If she is compromised in the least, it is already too much, for I will not permit it!"

The legation counsellor became greatly embarrassed, which he vainly tried to cloak by outward calmness.

"Oh!" he said, "reports that have no foundation and are devoid of truth are soon forgotten. Moreover, you must not forget that you can only suppress those reports at the expense of exposing that lady, and thus ruin her reputation."

"Bah!" exclaimed the commercial counsellor. "That lady has already ruined her reputation."

"What if you thereby disgrace her innocent husband?" continued Hermann von Frohberg.

Her Miller shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"That husband is already the laughing-stock of the town," zealously he exclaimed, "and he will be less so if I open his eyes, for then he can at least revenge himself, can slap his enemy in the face, and cease to be the cheated and betrayed husband of a faithless wife!"

Little Miller had worked himself up into such a state of wrath and excitement that his whole body trembled, while the legation counsellor inwardly became constantly more worried and restless.

"Your anger leads you too far, my dear Herr Miller," said he, pacifyingly, to his old friend. "You are bent upon doing a rash act; but you shall not do it!"

"Who will prevent me, I'd like to know?" impetuously exclaimed Herr Miller.

"I!" replied Hermann von Frohberg, who now seemed to have regained his former self-possession. "Your threats can only become effective through my assistance, and I decline to assist you."

The commercial counsellor would have become

still more angry, but when he gazed upon the firm, calm, and kindly face of his friend, his heated passions gradually grew cool, and after a while he said, quite calmly:

"This is a queer world! Our just laws of social life are mixed with frightfully unjust ones! A woman proves false to her husband, yet the world is silent, and the whole world by its silence becomes alike guilty. The guilty woman is surrounded by a protecting wall, as it were; an impenetrable barrier is formed between her and her husband, which prevents the truth from reaching him. But with a young girl the case is totally different. If an innocent creature is shamefully defamed, she is surrounded by no protection, and there is no one to do her justice. But you will be an exception, Herr Frohberg," said he, addressing himself to the legation counsellor; "you are incapable of being unjust —all the more so when it is a question between a guilty woman and an innocent girl!"

"Herr Miller is right, Hermann," said the elder Frohberg to his brother. "You must not forget that as soon as a part of the secret has become known, public opinion and general curiosity will ferret out that woman. Misled by appearances and resemblances, one is likely to suspect the wrong person, and an innocent woman may be condemned instead of the guilty one. It is necessary to guard against such accidents, since any lady, even my wife, is liable to be suspected!"

The legation counsellor trembled.

"Oh!" exclaimed little Miller, doubtingly, rocking his head to and fro; "please leave *my* wife out of the count in such matters. She certainly cannot be affected by that kind of scandal."

"And why not?" asked the elder Frohberg, totally oblivious of any presentiment in the remarks

he made, and which cut his brother to the heart. "Baron Branco, for instance, has been on very intimate terms with all of us for a long while. That in itself is sufficient to give rise to the most scandalous rumors."

Madame Baldrian, so long as there was any prospect of having her curiosity gratified, listened with the keenest attention; but when she saw that in all probability she would learn nothing more, got up from her seat with her accustomed suddenness, and with a mien as if she had inherited all the wisdom of Solomon, said:

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but it seems to me that you are disputing about the Kaiser's beard—in other words, thrashing old straw over again."

"How so?" asked the gentlemen, almost simultaneously.

"The Herr Legation Counsellor may, in God's name, keep his secret to himself," proceeded the matrimonial agent; "it will not be necessary for him to divulge it, the great mystery will soon be exposed."

The three gentlemen looked surprised.

"Yes!" spoke Madame Baldrian, further, "you said a while ago that that lady threatened to expose the baron if he should get married?"

"Certainly," answered the commercial counsellor, "but is he about to get married?"

"Yes!" replied the marriage missionary, with the utmost certainty.

"And to whom?" inquired the legation counsellor, turning pale.

The match-maker actually swelled with self-importance.

"What am I here for, think you, gentlemen?" said she, proudly looking around the circle. "The affair is as good as settled, and by arranging this

match I have accomplished three good ends. In the first place, I have disposed of the baron, for he had to be disposed of, somehow; I considered it my duty to do that. In the second, I'll expose the lady and force her to confess; and thirdly, I will thereby release Louisa from the coils of slander."

"And whom does the baron marry?" Hermann von Frohberg repeated, his question trembling slightly.

"That little creole-looking woman he had with him a while ago," returned the marriage instigator, "the daughter of the rich banker Silberstein, who disregards all questionable matters in order to become Madame la Baronne. The wedding will soon take place, and then the guilty woman will be compelled to show her hand."

While Madame Baldrian was talking, the dark shadows gradually disappeared from the fat countenance of the little commercial counsellor, like a mist before the conquering rays of the sun. His cheeks began to glow again, mouth and eye to smile, and while gleefully rubbing his plump hands so that they actually tingled, he said, with the utmost inward satisfaction:

"Yes, my dear friend, you are a clever woman, and are almost always in the right. But without pretending to much wisdom, I have an idea whereby we can fulfil your prophecy very briefly."

Madame Baldrian and the gentlemen looked at Herr Miller, inquiringly.

"I'll tell the news to everybody I meet," smirkingly said the latter, still rubbing his pudgy hands, "and thus it will reach the woman very quickly and will lead her to commit herself."

The marriage plotter was about to compliment little Miller upon his shrewdness, when the latter opened his eyes very wide and joyfully exclaimed:

"Here is your wife coming into the room with the doctor, Herr Frohberg. I must go and greet her, and at the same time will tell her all about the affair. It will amuse her very much."

At this statement the legation counsellor again turned deathly pale.

"Stop, unhappy man!" he whispered into the commercial counsellor's ear, stealthily detaining him by the arm.

Little Miller looked at him in surprise.

"You will kill Annie!" the legation counsellor whispered, further.

"What? How?" gasped Miller, forgetting himself.

"It is she!" added the younger Frohberg.

Everything became black before the eyes of the commercial counsellor, a cold sweat broke out upon his forehead, and helplessly he dropped into a chair to avoid sinking down on the floor.

"Heavens! what is the matter with you, Herr Miller?" asked the older Frohberg, as Madame Baldrian approached him in alarm.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" stammered Herr Miller, with closed eyes. "It is fearfully hot here. It is suffocating!"

"So it is," assented the legation counsellor, seizing the idea. "Come, brother, let us go into the music-room."

Thus saying, he left Miller to the care of Madame Baldrian, and seized his brother by the arm to lead him away.

Meanwhile Annie had approached the group.

"Wait a minute," said Karl von Frohberg to his brother, "till I tell my wife about the baron's engagement."

"Oh, you have plenty of time to do that," cried the legation counsellor, attempting to pull his

brother away. "I don't think the news is so interesting after all."

"What news?" asked Annie, who had by this time joined the two brothers.

A great fear seized upon the legation counsellor.

"The approaching marriage of Baron Branco to Fräulein Silberstein," answered the elder Frohberg, while the younger had a sensation as if the blood had frozen in his veins, and the commercial counsellor groaned from mental anguish.

But Madame von Frohberg, upon whose countenance the legation counsellor had fixed his gaze, did not move a muscle.

"I have heard of it already," said she, with icy indifference.

The commercial counsellor groaned now quite aloud, but this time it was more like a sigh of relief.

"Didn't the news surprise you at all?" asked the elder Frohberg of his wife, in some wonder.

"Surprise me?" returned the latter, with a markedly contemptuous smile. "Well, yes. We have judged the baron incorrectly, and will lose nothing by being thus undeceived by him now."

The heart of the legation secretary now beat immeasurably easier in his breast.

"God be praised!" he mentally exclaimed.

"Are you coming?" asked the elder Frohberg of his brother, piqued at having disposed of his news to so little advantage.

"No," returned the legation counsellor, who was very anxious to remain where he was. "I don't feel quite so warm now. I presume someone has opened a window somewhere."

"I am!" suddenly cried the little commercial counsellor, jumping from his seat like an india-rubber ball. "I feel fearfully hot. Come along, my friend."

Just then a servant passed by with glasses on a salver, filled with lemonade.

"Hold on a minute, Karl!" cried Miller, helping himself to one glass of the cooling drink after another till he had emptied three. "Ah!" he said, agreeably rubbing his round paunch; "I was awfully thirsty."

Then he seized the elder Frohberg by the arm, nodded pleasantly to the latter's wife, and departed with his friend to seek a place where he would complete the cooling off of his external surface also. The legation counsellor remained behind and apparently watched the company.

Madame Baldrian sat down near Madame Frohberg, in the recess of the window vacated by the gentlemen, and began a conversation with her which, however, did not flow fluently.

Hence the restless matrimonial agent was unable to stand it very long, and under some pretence disappeared in the crowd to seek Government Solicitor von Collin.

"At last I have disposed of the baron!" she murmured, with the utmost complacency. "He has given me trouble enough!"

After Madame Baldrian was gone the legation counsellor approached his sister-in-law, who was awaiting him calmly.

"You manifested remarkable self-control a little while ago, Annie," he began, in a subdued voice, "and I was pleased to see you capable of it."

His sister-in-law was silent.

"Or was this wonderful tranquillity merely the precursor of a storm that will be all the more dangerous?" asked the legation counsellor, further.

"Have no fear for me," returned Madame von Frohberg, in a firm and confidence-inviting tone of voice. "One cannot be jealous of a man who sells

himself for gold. Herr von Branco has turned out to be such a miserable specimen of humanity, that I have lost all interest in him."

The legation secretary seemed to be wonderfully elated at the words his sister-in-law had uttered.

"Indifference is the inexorable destroyer of love," continued the lady; "it soon causes one to forget the object of his affections."

The legation counsellor was silent for a while. After the first gratification he felt his thoughts seemed to have arrived at another dark subject.

"Your heart is perfectly free now," he said, after a pause; "may one hope that it will be inspired with a desire to fulfil its noblest mission?"

A light blush suffused the pale countenance of Madame von Frohberg.

It may have been the blush of gladness, perhaps that of shame; most probably it was a mixture of both.

"My future life," she returned, with downcast eyes, and in a low voice, "will, if it cannot blot out my fault, at least, I hope, greatly mitigate it. I might say, in extenuation of it, that I was young and led into a marriage I had no heart for, and that from this bad seed worse fruit subsequently sprouted. Still I do not want to excuse myself. A young girl may be misled, a married woman stands upon a different footing; she has the means to defend herself with, provided she chooses to use them. I thank God that Karl has not the least knowledge of the whole affair. He would not be able to bear the pain."

Annie sighed painfully; then she quickly raised her head, looked her brother-in-law firmly in the eye, and said:

"Fate has imposed a mild and an agreeable punishment upon me. Your brother never liked

life in Berlin. I will now request him to remove to our estate in the country. As he lived here in the capital for my sake, so will I henceforth reside in solitude for his. My hand on it, Hermann!"

The tears welled up in the lady's eyes as she said these words, and the legation counsellor was only able to suppress his emotions by an effort.

"I thank you, Annie," he managed to utter, "in the name of my good-hearted brother, who loves you better than anything on earth!"

Madame von Frohberg pressed his hand a second time.

"Please take me to another room," said she to her brother-in-law, rising. "I feel so choked here and oppressed; I would like to go home soon."

The legation counsellor offered her his arm.

When they reached the centre of the room, they met Baron Branco, who stepped aside, and then bowed profoundly to Annie; the legation counsellor he merely noticed with a disdainful look.

Madame von Frohberg did not even turn her head toward him, but proudly and coldly passed him by.

After the legation counsellor had taken his sister-in-law into another room, he returned, and hastily walked up to the baron.

"You here too, Herr Baron?" asked he, with a smiling mien, beneath which a dangerous calm seemed to be hidden.

"Does my presence here surprise you, Herr Legation Counsellor?" returned Branco, with a like cold demeanor.

"No, at least not very much," said Frohberg, "for when one possesses the principle of engaging in a certain kind of transaction, he doubtless has the courage to consummate it."

"Ah, you refer to——"

"I wanted to speak to you about the business matter that has taken place between you and Fräulein Silberstein," interrupted the legation counsellor.

"The business matter?" asked the baron, highly insulted.

"Or, if you wish that I should express it in a milder form," continued Frohberg, "of your sensible marriage. How much has Herr Silberstein paid you for your name, if I may ask?"

The baron became livid.

"Let us end this talk," said he, quickly; "if you seek to quarrel with me, Herr Legation Counsellor, you may be able to recall the fact that I have long ago challenged you; that you declined to accept it under some pretence, which I have already forgotten."

The legation counsellor was about to utter an angry reply, but he checked himself.

"Some pretence!" said he. "You are mistaken, Herr Baron! The reason why I refused to fight you was due to a circumstance that was much stronger than my will."

"I regret very much to be unable to comprehend you," said Baron Branco, slightly shrugging his shoulders.

"I'll take the liberty to explain myself," returned the legation counsellor; and then he proceeded with his statement:

"A lady who loved you had placed herself between you and me, made me promise not to fight with you, because your life would thereby be endangered, and she would be exposed. For these reasons, and for none other, Herr Baron, I declined to accept your shameless challenge. You will, perhaps, be able to conceive how much I have suffered during this time to see my brother dishonored, and in addition, a young and innocent girl,

who was very dear to me, placed in danger of being cheated out of her life-happiness by you. I was unable to punish so much shamelessness, Herr Baron, because that lady loved you; but this love, fortunately, was not of an undying nature, and has now been completely metamorphosed into contempt, which, as is well known, has nothing in common with jealousy. Being now master of my own actions, I am in a condition to settle my account with you."

The baron bowed with the refinement of a man of the world.

"I am always at your service!" returned he, and walked away, and was soon lost in the crowd.

A load seemed to have been taken off Counsellor Frohberg. His eye became brighter, his face serene and pleasant, and he retired to an adjacent room to find his brother and the commercial counsellor.

We will leave him now, and return to Madame Baldrian, who had gone away to seek her client, Government Solicitor von Collin.

She had been looking for him some time unsuccessfully, when she heard hurried footsteps behind her, and presently felt a severe tug at her rustling silk dress, which made her look around quickly.

"Is that you, Herr von Collin?" said she, in an injured tone. "You take familiarities which——"

"Oh, come now," returned he, interrupting, in an excited and hurried manner. "Don't be so punctilious with me, but tell me quickly the result!"

In the love of her calling Madame Baldrian overlooked the little familiarity which Herr von Collin took with her, and, taking up the main topic directly, she said:

"I have been looking for you for a long while, for I have something to tell you which——"

"Oh, if you knew how charming she is!" ex-

claimed the barrister, in an outburst of joyous frenzy.

The match-maker looked upon him in a slightly injured manner.

"Herr von Collin," repeated she, speaking sharply and emphasizing the words, "I have something very important to tell you, which——"

"Oh, how lovely she is—how ravishing!" again burst out Herr von Collin, in ecstatic ardor.

The apostle of matrimony drew herself up to her full height and cast a severely repellent look upon her client.

"Herr von Collin," she began a third time, in a still sharper tone, "I have the honor to inform you that——"

"I not only love her, but I idolize her—I idolize her!" interrupted the barrister again, in a transport of frenzied affection.

Madame Baldrian seemed disposed to become real angry now, for her brow wrinkled, and she looked much provoked.

But to the lover everything seemed to be so rosy, so beautiful, that he did not notice the anger of his mediator.

"My dear Madame Baldrian!" he cried, in an outburst of blissfulness, "do you know what? I am so happy that I'd kiss you, if I thought no one would see me!"

"Herr von Collin," said the matrimonial missionary, pretending to be quite offended, retreating a step, "I must seriously request you——"

"What is it you wish to say?" asked the solicitor. "You torture me unnecessarily with suspense. Speak, for pity's sake, speak!"

The hymeneal plotter made no reply, but, like an angry queen, turned to go away.

"Where are you going to?" cried the barrister,

detaining her again by a tug at her dress, so that she was obliged to remain stock-still to avoid having it torn.

"Herr von Collin!" exclaimed the angry lady, her countenance becoming suffused with a deep red tint. "Is this the way a gentleman ought to behave? Is this the way to treat a lady to whom you owe so much? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Herr von Collin!"

"Why, no, my dear friend," cried the barrister, in another ebullition of joy. "One so madly in love as I am need not be ashamed of anything. Such a love excuses everything! You ought to take that into consideration instead of blaming me. Don't you see that my soul is on fire? I tell you, Madame Baldrian, I'll marry Fräulein Wanda Miller even if she has not a penny!"

"Ah, that is beyond all expectation," said the match-maker, already considerably mollified, "and it saves me the disagreeable duty of telling you the result of my efforts in your behalf."

Herr von Collin's face assumed an expression like one who is suddenly awakened from a frightful dream.

"What do you mean?" asked he at last, staring at his matrimonial manager.

"If you hadn't interrupted me so often," continued the latter, "I would have told you long ago that it was still optional with you to withdraw yourself honorably."

"To withdraw myself honorably?" repeated the government solicitor, quite taken aback.

"Yes," said the matrimonial agent, "because Commercial Counsellor Miller now finds himself in a position to be compelled to again reduce the dowry of his daughters considerably."

"To again reduce the dowry of his daughters

considerably?" repeated the barrister like an echo, still looking foolish.

"That's what I said," went on Madame Baldrian. "Instead of dividing the half of his fortune by two it will now have to be divided by three. You comprehend how that happened, don't you?"

The government solicitor made a shrewd face, and jocularly threatened the maker of marriages with his finger.

"Oh, you rogue, you!" said he. "You only want to try me!"

"On my honor, no!" returned the conjugal missionary, solemnly putting her right hand over the region of her heart. "Herr Commercial Counsellor Miller has just informed me of the unlooked for, unexpected, and interesting future family event, and his resolution. Fräulein Wanda will now get only fifty thousand dollars."

The government solicitor's face lost its shrewd expression, and his head sank upon his breast.

"And in addition, the commercial counsellor says that he will not give his daughter to a man who has no position or calling whereby he can earn money," went on the matrimonial agent. "His views upon that point seem recently to have become more fixed than ever. Indeed, I cannot blame him for it," she added, "for a man without any occupation, and unable to earn any money, who submits to be fed by his wife, sitting with his hands in his lap, soon loses the respect of his wife, and with the loss of respect some of the love and domestic happiness also subsequently disappears."

The barrister sadly and hopelessly shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot undergo a third examination," said he mournfully to himself. "That is utterly impossible, however much I would like to do it."

"Well, then, I will inform the commercial counsellor that you have retired honorably," said Madame Baldrian. "I have the honor to bid you a good evening, Herr von Collin."

She then turned to go away.

But she had not yet left the room when she felt another tug at her dress, but such a strong one that she was obliged to step backward several paces.

"Heavens, Herr von Collin, I am at a loss what to think of you to-night!" said the match-maker, as she turned around and again beheld her *protégé* standing before her.

"I want to say something to you," whispered Herr von Collin, looking happy.

"Well?" inquired Madame Baldrian, partly angry and partly impatient.

"I'll be satisfied with the fifty thousand dollars!" whispered he into the lady's ear.

Despite her displeasure, Madame Baldrian gazed upon the young man with an interest that soon would have surmounted all other emotions.

"Well, but that will not bring about the desired result," said she, in a tone markedly tinged with sadness, "when you say that you are incapable of passing a third examination."

The barrister shrewdly shook his head.

"It is not absolutely necessary," said he.

The matrimonial agent looked at him inquiringly.

"Those who have passed the second examination are already qualified to become district judge and mayor, and these are quite respectable positions."

"What?" asked the match-maker. "Have you changed your views? The posts which formerly you would have refused with disdain, you will now accept? Who, or what, achieved that change in you?"

"Love!" whispered the barrister, with a beaming countenance.

"I have but one thing more to tell you," proceeded von Collin, further, coming close up to his matrimonial mediator.

"Well?" asked the latter, smilingly, and inquisitively holding her ear to him.

"Go back to the old man and talk to him," whispered the solicitor hotly, and then he imprinted such a vehement kiss upon her cheek as though he intended to bite it.

The apostle of matrimony put on a mortally offended appearance, and seemed undecided whether to upbraid him or hold out her other cheek to be kissed by him.

"Come, come, don't make any fuss about it," he whispered again in her ear. "It was only an expression of my heartfelt joy. If you make an outcry or faint, I'll give you another kiss!"

"I dare you to!" cried his matrimonial commissioner, suppressing a smile and nimbly skipping away.

On the way she murmured to herself, excitedly:

"Well, I never had anything like that happen to me before! Not many show such feelings of gratitude!"

The ball took its course.

Government Solicitor von Collin danced several more times with Fräulein Wanda; Legation Counsellor von Frohberg was remarkably attentive to Fräulein Louisa; Baron Branco was the subject of the constant whisperings of the company, and tortured himself with the society of Fräulein Silberstein; Karl von Frohberg and his wife soon drove home; Commercial Counsellor Miller was unwilling to listen to any more matrimonial projects, notwithstanding the importunities of Madame Baldrian;

Privy Counsellor Dr. Staberow, was compelled to walk so much in his tight patent leather boots, that at last his feet burned, while his wife and mother-in-law amused themselves splendidly; Major Rumpel had fallen asleep in a corner, and Madame Majoress (*née* Augusta Hotliver) related to everyone who would listen to her that she had refused to dance with several gentlemen, because that was somewhat risky for a young wife; and Rarrer drank so much punch that he came in collision with several persons in the course of the evening.

At last the lights gradually burned lower, a cloud of dust floated in the music hall, the little feet of the ladies and the big feet of the gentlemen began to ache, the eyes of the fathers and mothers began to close, the musicians frequently blew beside instead of into the mouth-pieces of their instruments, and bowed the finger board instead of the bridge of the violins, the servants stood in the hall to assist the guests with their wraps and overcoats, and yawned, while the drivers nodded upon the coaches in front of the house; pleasant words and tender glances had been exchanged, and everybody yearned for rest in order to extend the remembrance of these pleasures into dreams, the sweet, delightful dreams, in which everything is allowable.

The guests take their leave of the host, hostess, and mother-in-law, and then depart; some in their own conveyances, others in hired ones, and still others on foot.

As Major Rumpel, utterly tired out, and unsteady in his gait, was walking down the stairs, leaning upon the thick arm of the stout Augusta, who walked very slowly, carefully taking short steps, he noticed in advance of him a young man in a remarkably short and tight *paletot*, whom he subsequently found waiting on reaching the lower hallway.

"Is that you, Herr Bowwows," said he, opening his eyes wide. "What a queer overcoat you have on?"

"It isn't mine," replied Rarrer, who was somewhat confused and melancholy from the punch he had imbibed. "I got a new coat fvom my tailoh only day befoh yestehday, and to-day someone took it by mistake and left me this abweviated gahment."

The major would have liked to say something to him, but he was too tired, and therefore, by the aid of his wife, steered directly for his carriage.

Rarrer, of course, was as gallant as ever, and assisted Madame the Majoress into her conveyance, that had just driven up.

"Good night, young man!" said the tired major, climbing into the vehicle after his lady. "Don't forget ——" In reality he wanted to say, "Don't forget to get back your overcoat!" but his eyelids closed before he could finish the sentence, and he omitted the rest.

At the words, "don't forget," a burning admonition shot through the soul of Rarrer; and while shutting the carriage door, he whispered to the major:

"Nevah feah, wohthy man! That Baldwian woman shall be wendehd hahmless!"

In the next minute the driver started the horses, one of the carriage-wheels passed over Rarrer's big toe, and then rolled away.

"Oh!" uttered the major, sleepily, falling back into a corner. "That excited young man still harbors his horrible idea. If I don't forget it, I'll notify Madame Baldrian anonymously that her life is in danger."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rarrer, painfully drawing up his foot. "That blasted cawiage-wheel has wun oveh my toes! Fohtunately I am not huht vewy

much. What an evening this was again! But I am moah detehmined in my idea than evah. I can be of no bettah use than to sacwifice myself foh the puhpose of saving othehs from injuwy, and make life easy foh them. I am a modewn Ahnold von Winkelwied!"

This thought seemed to have strengthened him, for he hobbled along, on his way home, as well as he possibly could, shivering in his tight and short paletot.

One equipage after another drove away from the residence of Dr. Staberow into the dark night, and finally sounded, in the distance, like the melancholy buzzing of a large bumble-bee.

And wherever a carriage stopped, some of the windows displayed a light; the servants received their masters and mistresses at the door, relieved them of their wraps or overcoats, and they then quickly sought their rooms.

Bright ball robes are soon cast off, like a dusty flower, but in the hearts of some of the young dancers a different kind of flower has blossomed—love, genuine or imaginary.

How happily Wanda stretched herself out in her white, little bed and soon closed her eyes to dream!

Louisa was obliged to put out the light, and then she, too, dreamed.

The privy counsellor, Staberow, soaked his feet in cold water for a whole hour after the guests were gone; then he dreamed that he was placed in the stocks like the evil-doers in Shakespeare's time.

The fat Augusta dreamed not that the major was tired and snored, but that he was young and handsome as at the time of the Battle of Waterloo, where he made such bold attacks.

Everybody dreamed.

The city had again become perfectly silent.

The mundane night-watchman slept in the hallways or alleys, but the moon—the ancient, celestial watchman—listened to the dreams of the terrestrial sleepers, and seemed to be greatly amused, for he made an awfully funny face, and seemed to be laughing at them.

CHAPTER XVI.

TWO SHOTS INTO THE HEART AND TWO NEAR IT.

Late in the forenoon of the day following the ball of Dr. Staberow, Madame Baldrian hurried away to Charlottenburg to bring to an end the affair of her client, the government solicitor von Collin, since she found it was totally impossible to do anything with Papa Miller on the evening of the ball.

Indeed, Papa Miller was not yet visible, but, in the desire of the matrimonial agent to complete the business such small things did not count for much, for she had resolved to make an attack upon the centre now, and was therefore seated with the youngest daughter of the commercial counsellor upon a sofa in the parlor opening out into the garden, with the intention of breaking down the slight resistance at this fort.

The pretty Wanda still looked a little tired, her cheeks were somewhat paler than usual, her whole bearing denoted languor, and her dark eye was a little veiled.

But behind that veil a fire could be seen burning that seemed to be nourished in the heart.

Wanda reclined gracefully backward, her head, with the elf-like locks, resting upon a cushion, and listened to what Madame Baldrian was saying in her usual didactic style.

Till now, however, the apostle of matrimony did not seem to have achieved very much. There was evidently some obstacle in the mind of the young girl which she was unable to remove, for the brill-

iant description she gave of conjugal bliss elicited not one word of response.

The matrimonial agent was becoming impatient, her dry tongue clung to the roof of her mouth, her hands and cheeks burned with feverish heat, and her eye hung upon the lips of the young girl, as if she wished to draw a final resolution from her very soul.

But Fräulein Wanda remained in the corner of the sofa, kept her head turned slightly sideways, and listened quite indifferently, without taking the least part in the conversation.

This is a habit, or at least a peculiarity, that one often meets with in young ladies.

They frequently remain for hours in their peculiar sulks. They witness the approach of a storm, the destructive effects of which they know very well, but still allow the lightning to flash, the thunder to crash, and the storm to rage; they know that they are capable of controlling the hurricane with one word, with the motion of a hand, or by raising one finger, yet the mouth remains closed and the little white hand remains quietly and negligently in their laps.

But when the lightning has struck, when injury has been done, when the floodgates of the heavens have been opened and the shattered clouds crash down upon the earth, then the drops flow from my young lady's eye, the crust of sulky stubbornness is dissolved by the welling up of the tears, the lips open to utter a tender, loving word, the eye assumes a beseeching expression and the little white hand is raised from the lap and seeks the hand of some dear friend.

It was not, to be sure, quite so bad to-day in the case of Fräulein Wanda.

An attentive observer and connoisseur of the female heart would have quickly perceived that

a struggle was going on within this lovely young creature between a very deep and a very superficial emotion, such as often occurs in life in its most varied forms.

The old saying, that "If you can pass the dog, you will also pass his tail," loses much of its force through instances like those alluded to.

How often does it happen that one will entertain his friends at dinner, give them the best the market and his cellar afford, yet economize on the cigar, and thus perhaps destroy all the pleasures of the meal. He was willing to spend many dollars on a dinner, but was loath to spend a proportionate amount on a cigar.

He passed the dog readily enough, but he was unable to pass the tail.

A lady will pay a hundred dollars for material for a dress and spend fifty dollars for trimmings, and then spend a whole day in looking for lining on which she can save a few cents.

She was able to pass the dog easy enough, but not the tail.

In the end, however, it was more than the famous apostle of matrimony, Madame Baldrian, could stand.

"Well, child," said she, at last, "you keep me talking here till my breath gives out, without saying a word. Do you think I have nothing else to do? Come now, answer me. Rouse yourself from your sweet languor, and let me know whether you will marry him or not."

Fräulein Wanda made a very slight movement, but still she did not answer.

"What is the matter with you, any way?" cried the instigator of marriages. "Have you any fault to find with the young gentleman? If you have, then speak out!"

Fräulein Wanda cleared her throat as if she was about to speak.

"Well?" asked the apostle of matrimony, her face glowing with impatience.

"Mayor's wife or district judge's wife," said Wanda, puckering up her mouth a little ironically.

"Ah!" uttered Madame Baldrian, "'There's where the dog is buried,' as our immortal bard says. Your love, then, cannot put up with such a slight drawback?"

"And such small salary!" added Fräulein Wanda.

The matrimonial agent looked at her reproachfully.

"Yes," went on the young lady, coloring slightly beneath her mentor's gaze, "I myself wouldn't mind these trifles; but what will the world say? Papa is now able to give me fifty thousand dollars only."

Here she stopped, blushed still more deeply, and then in indescribable confusion cast down her eyes.

The matrimonial agent was obliged to smile involuntarily.

"Well," she began once more, after a slight silence, in order to relieve her young friend from embarrassment. "Well, can't two persons live on two to three thousand a year?"

"Oh, yes!" returned Fräulein Wanda. "As I said, if I was the only person concerned in the matter it would be of no moment; but what will my friend Mary say, who lately was married to the rich lumber merchant, Kranz, and Augustie, whose husband owns such a beautiful turnout? They will think that I have not enough to eat at home, and alongside of them I will look like a poor woman."

"And will not your love compensate you for the lack of riches?" asked the match-maker. "Did Mary marry the fifty-year-old lumber merchant, Kranz, for love? Does Augustie feel happy beside

her gouty husband in his beautiful turnout? Don't you think that those two young wives feel a greater void in their hearts from the lack of love than you will feel from the lack of certain luxuries? That kind of happiness is only imaginary and superficial. One may be bedecked with jewels, yet the heart be not gladdened by a single ray of sunshine and love."

Madame Baldrian uttered these words so impressively and with so much feeling that it was apparent that she really felt them.

In other cases, again, it is true, she would argue just the reverse, because her untiring, restless nature, impelled by an irresistible passion to form combinations, dispensed with fixed principles.

The formation of marriages was the goal of her life, and she took so great an interest in it that her whole mind and being knew no other gratification.

Fräulein Wanda listened to the marriage-maker's talk with a very attentive ear, and her soul seemed to be reflecting now.

"Well?" began the apostle of matrimony again, who expected a greater effect from her words. "Decide now, my child, for a decision you will have to make. I am in a great hurry. I am sitting upon hot coals, so to say!"

"Yes, it is easy enough for you to say, 'Decide, decide,'" exclaimed Fräulein Wanda, imitating the marriage proctor, and rising from her reclining attitude, "but it is evident that you are not the person to become engaged. I cannot get it out of my head that I shall be obliged to become Madame the Mayoress. Really, I am not stout enough to occupy that position—or Madame District Judgess, for this, again, I am not slender enough, and when I think of these two titles I become hungry straightway."

The marriage missionary sympathetically shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, yes," said she, "if your happiness consists in eating, drinking, and dress, then you do right in rejecting Herr von Collin. Still, one more question before I go! Tell me, candidly, what you think of him."

"Oh," replied Fräulein Wanda, smiling, a proof that she was telling the truth, "I think he is very nice and agreeable; I have a great deal of sympathy for him."

"In a word, you love him, hey?" asked Madame Baldrian, moving slightly on the sofa.

Wanda blushed again and cast down her eyes.

"Well?" urged the match-maker once more.

Fräulein Wanda nodded.

"Even as Madame Mayoress, or Madame District Judgess?" went on the marriage instigator.

Wanda waited a moment, and then nodded again.

"Well, God be praised!" exclaimed Madame Baldrian, like one who has finished a tedious and laborious piece of work. "'All is well that ends well.' I have seldom had a more difficult case than yours, and you will, therefore, be the happier for it!"

After these words Madame Baldrian was about to rise and say 'good-by' to Wanda, when the servant entered and said that the Herr Government Solicitor von Collin was without, and would like to speak to the lady privately.

"Well, here we have it," said the marriage promoter, while Wanda's heart began to beat a thousand times a minute. "Upon my word, it was high time. Shall I ask him to come in here?" asked she, in a low voice.

Fräulein Wanda nodded almost imperceptibly, got up, and then said aloud:

"I'll leave you, Madame Baldrian."

And then she made a slight bow, smiled at her confidentially, and left the room.

"Tell Herr von Collin that I await him here," said Madame Baldrian to the servant, taking a seat upon the sofa, and spreading out her dress as much as possible.

A few minutes later the government solicitor entered the room.

He was in a great hurry and excited, sat down without the least ceremony upon a chair, and said, in a breathless voice :

"I am exceedingly glad to find you here. I have been looking for you all over. I hope I come in time!"

Madame Baldrian controlled herself, but looked at her client in surprise. "First of all, I have the honor to bid you good-morning!" said she, reminding the young man that he had neglected the common proprieties.

"Good morning! good morning!" returned von Collin affably, not perceiving, or not wanting to perceive, that he had been corrected for lack of manners. "Come, tell me quickly, what you have done? How far have you gone?"

"Don't you see that I have lost no time in carrying out the instructions which you gave me last night, and which I was then unable to do?" returned the lady, somewhat piqued.

"Did you say that I would come and propose to her?" quickly inquired the barrister, further. "Did you tell her that I am serious and unalterably resolved to ask for the hand of the young lady?"

Madame Baldrian looked very much surprised.

"Why do you ask me these questions?" she exclaimed, somewhat hurt.

Herr von Collin seemed embarrassed as to what

reply he should make; he twirled his hat in his hands till it became quite rough.

"Mayhap you have changed your mind again, my fine Herr mathematical counsellor!" asked the matrimonial agent, ironically.

The barrister twirled his hat still more, and replied, while laboring under considerable embarrassment:

"I don't intend to say that, but since yesterday evening certain circumstances and changes, or rather changes in my circumstances, have occurred ——"

"May one ask what these circumstances or changes of circumstances are?" asked the match-maker, becoming intensely anxious.

"I told you once of my old uncle," returned Herr von Collin, "whose sole heir I presumably was."

Madame Baldrian nodded her head.

"This morning while still in bed I received a dispatch stating that the old gentleman had an attack of apoplexy and had soon after expired," continued the solicitor.

The match-maker was silent, but she made a face as if she already divined what was coming.

Herr von Collin raised his head and looked at her.

"Do you know how much he has left me?" he asked.

The marriage procuress shrugged her shoulders.

"Two hundred thousand dollars!" said Herr von Collin.

The apostle of matrimony was still silent.

The barrister now tried to restore his hat to its former smooth condition, and still did not seem to know how to get at his subject.

"Yes," he went on at last, as if his patroness had given him an answer to the question. "A nice sum

of money. But you will admit, Madame Baldrian, that with such a fortune—"

"One does not feel bound to keep his promise," suddenly interrupted the matrimonial agent, greatly annoyed. "Yes, I can very well conceive that you are capable of that."

Herr von Collin shook his head, and made her a sign to sit still and listen to him.

"No," he began. "You are altogether mistaken in your inference, Madame Baldrian. I am still in love with Fräulein Wanda—indeed, even more so, and it is still my intention to marry her; but, since I am resolved to marry for love, I would like to know whether she will have me for my own sake and not for the sake of my riches, for riches bring doubt; and although she may still be unaware of my good fortune she is likely to hear of it soon, and for that reason I have hurried hither for the purpose of testing Wanda's heart."

"Ah!" uttered the marriage missionary, beaming with joy. "Albeit, you are a great egotist, like all men, still an honorable man—a *blasé* youth with a heart that can melt. I have no fault to find with such a proposition," she added, rising, "and I will make some excuse for sending Fräulein Wanda to you directly."

"You are very kind," said the solicitor, likewise rising, involuntarily casting a glance in the mirror.

Who can find fault with him for doing that?

Indeed, Fräulein Wanda was also standing before the mirror in her room at that moment, and was prinking herself as much as she possibly could.

"Come now, do your best," his matrimonial mentor admonished him. "Don't be too long with your prelude, and don't be too bluff in putting the question. Both are dangerous. Always keep the happy medium!"

"Thanks; I'll conduct myself very properly," returned the solicitor, self-complacently.

"Adieu, then!" said the matrimonial agent.

"Adieu! But not one word!" returned von Collin, admonishing her with a finger.

The lady placed her right hand upon her heart, and then disappeared.

Herr von Collin found himself alone, and in the most charming and peculiar situation of his whole life.

He expected the entrance into the room of the girl of his choice, the one he loved, and whom he intended to make his wife; and from her lips he wished to hear the confession that his love was reciprocated.

He walked up and down with big strides, and repeated to himself the speech which he had composed in the morning, and rehearsed some fifty times while dressing himself, so that he had it perfect while taking his coffee. He would have been able to deliver it correctly, even if he had been suddenly awakened from a sound sleep. It is a wonderfully important moment of life.

Engagements that are not of a business nature are brought about by a mixture of poetry and prose, of idealism and rationalism, of fantasy and thoughtlessness, of enthusiasm and sense, but without the least aid from calculation and reflection.

The mind and the body are attracted, transported, and the fear of loss spurs on the desire to gain possession with irresistible force.

One often enters into a life engagement quicker than he forms a resolution to buy an article, which can be sold if it does not suit.

But then passions would not be passions if they were amenable to reflection.

His heart beat so violently that the left lapel of

his coat trembled perceptibly, while the right one was perfectly immovable.

All the articles in the room looked totally different from usual. In color they all looked brighter and pleasanter. The trees in the garden, which he saw through the window, nodded at and wafted to him their greetings and best wishes.

They must have known how it was with Wanda's heart, for the young girl doubtless had talked to them about her love and also of his.

The birds carolled and twittered differently from usual; some of them repeatedly turned and twisted their pretty little heads, and flirted with their seductive tunes, in order to attract the attention and admiration of the others.

The former, probably, were the females who wanted to be regarded pretty by the males.

The same phenomenon is observed in man.

If an engagement is announced to a company of young ladies, the others soon brace up, prink themselves, and begin to turn their pretty little heads as if to say: "H'm! We could have engaged ourselves just as well as she. Indeed, we are much prettier than she is; just look at us well, and your heart will soon begin to beat!"

The little birds outside, then, must have known the young man's business here and what he might expect.

Suddenly, however, he started from his reverie as if he happened to think of something very important.

"Heavens!" he thought; "do I remember my pretty speech, which I intend to make to her?" and he began to rehearse it again, probably for the fiftieth time. "My dear Fräulein—my dear Fräulein—my dear Fräulein—Heavens, how my thoughts have become confused and my mind upset! I knew it so

well, so fluently! It would be terrible if I should act like a dunce or be unable to address her properly, or say what I want to say in proper language! The first impression is always the best, and if I should seem laughable to her to-day, she will perhaps laugh at me all through life. My dear Fräulein—er—er—courage! I think, however, it is only the anticipation of meeting her that confuses me, because it is usually more powerful than the reality. Hence, when Fräulein Wanda enters, I'll advance and with the most courteous demeanor say to her earnestly, but most pleasantly: My dear Fräulein—"

At the very moment he was saying these words, the door was slowly opened, and Wanda appeared with as much freedom from embarrassment as a young actress who had firmly resolved not to be shy, yet the instant she beholds the foot-lights and the audience, loses all her courage.

Now Wanda likewise stood quite a while outside and endeavored to rid herself of her embarrassment, so as not to make an unfavorable impression; but when at last she opened the door and beheld her audience that was just in the act of addressing a speech to her, all the good resolutions she had formed were suddenly dissipated, and she became so confused, shy, and perplexed, that she even forgot to shut the door after her.

The government solicitor was just as much upset by her unexpected appearance as she was at beholding him. He stood stock-still, like one petrified, and stared at Fräulein Wanda, who cast her eyes down to the floor and began to tremble.

"Heavens!" thought the solicitor.

"Heavens?" thought Fräulein Wanda.

"What will she think of me?" thought the barrister.

"What will he think of me?" thought Wanda.

"If I could only think of my speech!" thought von Collin.

"I hope he will say something!" thought Fräulein Miller.

"If she had only closed the door after her," thought the solicitor. "How can one say what he wants to say with the door open!"

"I wonder whether he has lost his tongue?" thought the young lady.

"I must try to shut the door first!" thought Herr von Collin.

He now took courage and started on tip-toe toward the door, making a circuit around the young lady.

"At last he is coming nearer!" thought Fräulein Miller.

The solicitor was making his way gingerly toward the door, with his hat in his right hand, and was now not far away from the young lady. The latter was glowing, her heart throbbed in her bosom like a trip-hammer; there was a buzzing sound in her ears like a strong wind sweeping through the streets.

Now he was close to her; now his hat brushed her dress, and the noise which she had heard she mistook for words that he had said.

"What did you say?" she stammered out just then in her almost indescribable confusion.

The solicitor stopped as if he had been suddenly turned into stone.

When a young man at last gathers up sufficient courage to propose to a young lady, and she says to him, "What did you say?" it requires a good deal of presence of mind and a good deal of mental determination to repeat that proposal.

But when he has not yet said anything at all, but only wished to shut the door, like our friend, Government Solicitor von Collin, and a young lady

asks him "What did you say?" the affair usually suffers a severe blow from it—a blow from which it does not soon recover—and so it was in this case.

Herr von Collin now stood trembling and embarrassed before Fräulein Wanda Miller, and, since Fräulein Wanda Miller in the noise in her ears, heard no answer to her question, it was not to be expected that she would repeat it.

In the first few moments Government Solicitor von Collin was unable to think of anything, his mind was a total blank, and that of Fräulein Miller was in a like condition.

Soon, however, the head of the former began to get clear and his thoughts to come back to him, and he mentally sought for a measure whereby he might save his position.

When one sits near a strange lady at a table, to whom, for the sake of propriety, it is necessary to say a few words before the soup is served, he will generally, after discarding many sensible and good remarks, say something about the everlasting weather.

Solicitor von Collin found himself just then in a similar situation.

He taxed his mental faculties to the utmost; he exerted his mind all he could to conjure up something and say, but discarded first one remark and then another, till at last he began to grow apprehensive that everything would be lost, and that it was high time for him to say something and end a scene which was alike embarrassing to him and to Fräulein Miller.

"I think there is a draught," he finally managed to utter, after a great deal of mental exertion.

"Yes, I think so too," gasped Fräulein Wanda.

And in the next minute both started for the door, and then stopped, and started again, in order to

close it, and the hands of both parties met upon the door-knob.

There must be a good deal of electricity in a human being.

As the two warm hands thus rested in each other, a hot wave or current coursed toward the hearts of each individual where all the warmth of the body now seemed to concentrate.

Hence their heads became a little more free, and their thoughts a little more clear.

The barrister forgot all about his speech, but he had no need for it, as he might have known; for when the heart talks, words from the mouth are altogether unnecessary.

The heart talks vastly better and more understandingly.

After the hands had shut the door conjointly, they remained in each other for a little while; but as the hearts, with their dumb language, had reached an understanding upon the principal topic, his hand ventured to take hers from the door-knob, and so conduct her to the sofa, upon which she mechanically sat down.

For himself he pushed a chair as closely to her as possible, and then again took her hand in his, which she willingly permitted.

"I love you!" he stammered, in a low voice.

The young girl trembled.

"Will you be mine?" he continued.

Wanda did not answer, but, in such cases, no answer is, still, an answer—in fact, it is a very sufficient one.

"Even if I should be a mayor?" inquired Solicitor von Collin.

Wanda was silent.

"Or a district judge?"

Wanda still did not answer.

A great joy began to blaze up in the heart of the young man.

"We will have to live very modestly," added the barrister. "My uncle is by no means as rich as you may have supposed, and he may live many years yet. I presume you will reject me now, since I can only offer you such a modest support?"

The young girl raised her head and gazed upon him so tenderly and faithfully with her big eyes, in which tears began to form, that the joy in his heart blazed up still more.

"Will you?" asked von Collin, in a transport of joy.

"No!" replied Wanda, at last, with overpowering emotion, and in the next moment he pressed an ardent kiss upon her lips, and they lay in each other's arms.

Neither of them could tell how it actually happened, though, to be sure, they were never asked to account for it, since it concerned no one but themselves.

Thus they stood, blissfully oblivious of everything around them, when they thought they heard footsteps approaching them, and presently a familiar voice mellifluously close to them, said:

"I congratulate you both!"

They tore themselves apart and beheld Madame Baldrian, bowing to them profoundly as an accompaniment to the words she had just uttered.

For a moment Fräulein Wanda seemed to be affected by a new embarrassment, but soon her youthful, happy, vivacious temperament asserted itself, the long-suppressed joy and happiness were bound to find an escape; so she rushed upon the matrimonial agent, gave her a hearty kiss, grasped her about the waist with both arms, and dragged her, dancing, around the room several times, like a happy child, joyfully exclaiming:

"I'll be Madame the Mayoress! I'll be Madame the District Judgess!"

"Heavens help me! Let me go, child! You squeeze the breath out of me!" gasped the apostle of matrimony, who, at every additional step, was becoming more and more short of breath, when Wanda at last allowed her to drop into a chair, from the cushioned seat of which she at first rebounded a little, and then, like a bent lily, sank back utterly exhausted.

"Whew!" puffed Madame Baldrian, fanning herself with her handkerchief. "If this thing goes on I'll soon be obliged to renounce all interest in unmarried people. One risks her health with such ardent clients. What nonsense was that you were talking about becoming Madame Mayoress or Madame District Judgess, anyway?" added the matchmaker, after a little while.

"Well," returned the young lady, "we will have to be either mayor or district judge, as our uncle is not near as rich as we supposed."

"Oh, papperlappapp!" laughed the apostle of matrimony. "He only wished to test you, whether you really loved him. He will never be mayor, for his rich uncle is dead and has left him two hundred thousand dollars!"

The young lady looked inquiringly and somewhat reproachfully upon von Collin.

"Don't be offended, Wanda, dear," said he, going to her and taking her hand. "I know now that you love me. Grant me the joy that will make me happy all through life."

At this moment Louisa entered the room, and on beholding the tell-tale group, was at first at a loss what to say or how to conduct herself toward the different individuals forming it; but Wanda did not keep her long in suspense, for she rushed up to her,

gave her a hearty kiss, and was about to present her to her intended, but the match-maker forestalled her.

"Now to papa!" urged the latter, in the hope of mollifying Wanda, who seemed to feel hurt. "He is already forewarned, you will therefore have no difficult task with him."

"Papa has gone out for a walk after his nap," said Louisa.

"Oh!" exclaimed the barrister, provoked, "I'll have to wait before I can obtain his consent."

"Mamma is awake!" exclaimed Fräulein Wanda, with the usual impatience of a young girl who, whatever she possesses already, would like to possess it still more justly, especially if it is a matter belonging to the domain of love.

In matters of love girls and women are imbued with actual avarice, and anything of that kind they may have acquired they will begrudge even to their dearest, best, and most intimate bosom friends.

"Well, if mamma is awake, obtain mamma's consent first!" said Madame Baldrian. "At any rate, it is your duty to wait upon her forthwith, especially as you have not yet had the opportunity of being presented to her. If you will have the kindness to follow me, it will afford me great pleasure in being able to perform that delightful duty."

"I am at your service!" returned the solicitor, going to Wanda for the purpose of taking leave of her for the first time.

"Don't stay long—do you hear?" she whispered to him.

Herr von Collin shook his head, kissed her, and then followed the apostle of matrimony to his future mother-in-law.

The sisters remained in the room.

"What do you think, Louisa?" began Wanda, after a lengthy silence.

"I am delighted, and wish you joy with all my heart upon your engagement," said the sister.

"Do you like him?" asked little Wanda, after another silence, glancing at Louisa stealthily.

"He is a handsome man, and, I hope, a good man, too!" returned her sister.

"Of course, he is good!" burst out Wanda. "He loves me, and when a man loves he is invariably good!"

Louisa smiled.

"You are not angry with me because I engaged myself before you did, are you?" asked Wanda, further. "As the eldest sister, you should have had the precedence!"

A dark shadow passed over Louisa's countenance.

"If you were to wait till I am married, you might remain single all your lifetime!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wanda. "Then you don't approve of marrying?"

Louisa had to laugh, in spite of herself.

"Oh, yes," she returned, "but only upon condition that one loves her husband."

"Well, who would prevent you from loving?" asked Wanda, with naive wonder.

"Perhaps it is impossible for me to marry the man I love," said Louisa, sadly.

Wanda looked serious for a little while, then shook her head impatiently and cried:

"Oh, this is altogether too tragic and too complicated for me! I have enough to think about my own affairs now. Adieu, Louisa," she continued, giving her sister a hearty kiss. "Do you know where I am going now? To my room. There I can hear through the keyhole quite distinctly everything that goes on in mamma's room! I'll have real fun! Good-by, and don't look so sad!"

After these remarks she ran away happy and joyous, like the spirit of love itself.

Left alone, Louisa sat down by the window, rested her beautiful head upon her hand, and gazed into the garden.

For her, however, the trees had no greetings and no good wishes, and even the little birds did not seem as happy as they did a while ago to the fortunate Collin.

If a gloomy face gazes into the mirror, a gloomy face is also reflected back again.

A picture stood before her mind, which she had gazed upon from childhood up; but now it appeared to her in a totally different light, and she felt altogether different when she gazed upon it.

When the heart is full with a sweet secret, it longs to relieve itself of it—to impart it to someone, and the most serious natures, under such circumstances, become talkative like the most serene and childish.

Still one is very cautious how he imparts such a confession to another.

At first the secret is deemed so sacred that one fears to profane it by clothing it in rough words. Indeed, one scarcely ventures to think of it. Gradually, however, one becomes more familiar with it, and when the heart is so full that it is ready to burst, then the first shy words are uttered, very, very lowly, to one's best friend—that is, to one's self.

Then come the trees, and the flowers, because they are so kind, and listen so patiently, and are not apt to divulge a secret.

Later, much later, a friend—a sister or a mother—is confided in.

Louisa's secret was just passing into the second stage, for she spoke the first few shy words to herself.

"The good Wanda!" she whispered. "She will be happy!"

While gazing thoughtfully upon the trees in the garden, she heard light footsteps coming through the room.

She turned quickly around, and was somewhat startled at seeing Hermann von Frohberg, apparently lost in thought, with his head slightly bent forward, walking through the room. He did not see her before she turned around, and then he nodded to her and smiled sadly, and was about to pursue his way.

"Herr von Frohberg!" said Louisa, in a very low voice.

The legation counsellor stopped and looked at the young lady inquiringly.

"Why do you not bid me 'good morning,' as you are accustomed to do?" asked Louisa, a dark shadow passing over her beautiful countenance.

"Good morning, dear Louisa," said the legation counsellor, still preoccupied. "Don't be offended. I am looking for your papa. I wish to speak to him!"

The dark shadow upon Fräulein Louisa's countenance gave way to a happy smile of hope.

"You, too, wish to speak with papa?" asked the young lady, breathing hurriedly.

The legation counsellor gazed upon her somewhat surprised.

"Yes," he replied, "I wish to speak with him; and why that 'too,' upon which you lay so much stress?"

Fräulein Louisa turned red in the face, but the voice of the heart had once begun to speak, and her feelings welled up so violently that she was incapable of suppressing them.

"Because, about a quarter of an hour ago, a young

gentleman left this room to seek papa, for the purpose of——"

"Of asking for your hand?" interjected the legation counsellor, quickly—almost vehemently.

Louisa began to tremble beneath the gaze that accompanied these words.

"Oh!" said she, "in what a tone you said that! And why did you say it?" she added, in a still lower voice.

"Why?" repeated Hermann, again lapsing into thought. "Why? I don't know myself."

Fräulein Louisa's eyes assumed a wild, staring, and beseeching expression.

"If you know," said she, "and do not want to tell me, I think you are very unkind."

"Yes," returned the legation counsellor, after a brief silence, "you are right, Louisa. There is a barrier between us which must be removed; there are certain fears which, on your side, perhaps, are based upon imaginations. But what am I talking about?" he continued, quickly passing his hand over his forehead. "I may be mistaken; I *am* mistaken, but I want to know in what, at least."

A whole flood of emotions seemed to well up in the young lady's heart.

"Oh, speak!" she began anew. "I beseech you, speak, and I'll answer you as candidly and honestly as if I was talking to myself."

The legation counsellor's face again became overcast.

"No," said he, "not now. The time for confessions and admissions is not well chosen."

The legation counsellor seemed to be attacked by a strange nervousness as he made this reply.

"Soon," he ejaculated, "in half an hour, perhaps; yes, yes, in an hour, we will speak about it without reserve—or never!" he added, quickly.

Fräulein Louisa was frightened at these words and at the tone in which they were uttered.

"'Or never,'" she repeated, sadly. "Why this terrible word?"

Hermann von Frohberg wrinkled his brow.

"Please forget it if it alarms you," he said. "It is of no consequence; I know no more what I say."

Just then Commercial Counsellor Miller was heard speaking outside to a servant.

"Papa is coming," cried Louisa, going quickly to the door. "Shall I tell him you wish to see him here alone?"

"Yes!" replied von Frohberg, pressing the hand of the young lady.

Fräulein Louisa gazed into his eyes once more, beseechingly.

"Why never?" she asked, in a low voice.

"It is nothing. Please forget that word!" replied the legation counsellor, trying to make a pleasant obeisance.

Louisa sighed involuntarily and deeply, and then left the room.

A few minutes later the little Commercial Counsellor Miller entered.

He was very much heated; big drops of perspiration were gathered upon his high, bald forehead; his fat, glistening countenance bore an expression of great concern.

"What is the matter?" he asked, immediately upon entering, breathing hurriedly. "I can make neither head nor tail of the people outside there! A young gentleman, I am told, is here, who wants to speak with me, and now you too are here and want to talk with me! It is enough to alarm one! I am so apt to be frightened now—since the—happy information I recently obtained."

The legation counsellor seemed to be standing

on glowing coals while little Miller was delivering his speech, which lasted altogether too long for him.

Barely did the little man pause, probably to begin again with fresh breath, when Frohberg grasped his arm, and in a low voice whispered to him:

"I am very sorry that I am, nevertheless, compelled to frighten you, my dear friend, but I will not keep you long in suspense; I'll be brief, because I have little time to spare. Here is a letter," he continued, taking a sealed note from the breast-pocket of his coat and handing it to the commercial counsellor, who stood there very pale and with open mouth. "These are my last wishes, which I confide to you; for well-known reasons, I cannot leave them with my brother. For your information, let me say that I am going to fight a duel in the course of an hour with Baron Branco, in a secluded spot about ten minutes walk from here. Every precaution has been taken to avoid our being surprised, which I would deem very unfortunate."

The little commercial counsellor still stood like a stone pillar. He held the letter in his hand, gazed upon his friend with big eyes and a frightened expression of countenance, and said not a word.

"You understood what I said, did you not, and you will comply with my requests?" asked the legation counsellor.

"Yes!" said little Miller, with a hoarse rattle in his throat as if he was being strangled. "You are about to fight a duel with Baron Branco, to avenge the honor of your brother."

"And yours, too," returned the legation counsellor, quickly; "or rather Louisa's, which this disreputable fellow has traduced. I concede that duelling is a savage, immoral, and unbecoming custom for our time; but there are conditions that cannot be

settled in any other manner. Prejudice is still too strong in the breast of man."

The commercial counsellor wiped the cold sweat from his forehead.

"Don't you fear that your brother will learn of this bad business?" he asked, as if his windpipe was constricted.

"No!" he replied. "The affair has been arranged with the greatest secrecy, since the baron, too, has every reason for wishing it kept a profound secret. Well, now, put the letter away, my dear Herr Miller; don't worry, and don't betray yourself by looking so terribly alarmed. Fare you well!"

"Fare you well!" repeated little Miller, putting the letter into his pocket, and trying to look unconcerned.

"To meet again!"

"To meet again!" returned Miller, with a groan, whose heart beat like a hammer in his breast.

The legation counsellor hastened out of the room with hurried strides.

There are undoubtedly premonitions in life, but in this case they amounted to actual fears.

When Fräulein Louisa went out and left her father with the legation counsellor, her fears increased with every minute. She hurried down the garden, because she felt that she must be alone; for in some situations of life, solitude, where one can speak to himself, is more consoling than the mind of the most sympathizing friend, who can never feel so strongly, and consequently is not as soothing as the oppressed heart requires.

But she could not go away far from the house. She felt as if a magnet was within it that attracted her, and therefore she only walked back and forth a few paces in a hidden path near by, in order to keep an eye upon the window, and also upon the

wide gravel walk leading from the hall-door to the gate opening out upon the street.

The few minutes of conversation between the legation counsellor and her father seemed to Louisa so many hours of torturing suspense, and every moment her head became more feverish, and her blood coursed more rapidly.

Suddenly she saw the legation counsellor walking down the gravel walk with hasty steps toward the street gate.

Louisa felt as if her heart was compressed in a vice. She wanted to cry out loudly, and call him back; she wanted to hurry after him and cling to him, but her voice failed her; her feet remained immovable, as if rooted to the spot. She was only able to stretch out her arms toward him mutely and beseechingly, yearning to detain him.

But the legation counsellor had no idea what emotions were excited near by for him, he walked along the path deeply lost in thought, opened the gate, stepped into the street, and took the first droschki that drove by, giving the driver certain instructions which Louisa did not understand.

Hardly was he out of her sight when the ban that held her so firmly vanished.

"Or never!" gasped her oppressed breast.

Immediately afterward she uttered a heartrending cry, and ran as fast as her feet would carry her toward the house.

The poor Commercial Counsellor Miller, who was still suffering from the crushing effects of the secret confided to him, had sunk down upon a seat and dropped his head upon his hands, in the hope that in quietness he should be able to somewhat arrange his dreadful thoughts, and rally from the shock which had almost bereft him of reason; then the door was suddenly torn open, and he, as we know,

had become nervous and easily frightened, started as if a bucket of cold water had been poured upon his bald head.

"Father!" cried Louisa, in soul-rending tones, at the same moment dropping down before him upon her knees, and clasping his legs.

"God have mercy upon my poor soul!" cried the little man. "What has happened? Is he dead?"

Louisa stared at him, horrified.

"Who?" she asked, in tones of the greatest agony. "Who do you suppose is dead?"

Papa Miller became so dreadfully embarrassed that he actually trembled, and Louisa gazed upon him with looks that seemed to penetrate into his very soul.

"Why, who should be dead?" asked the commercial counsellor, shutting his eyes to avoid the burning gaze of his daughter. "What do you want? Why do you frighten me so? I feared that Wanda had fallen into the water and was drowned!"

"Father!" cried Louisa, shaking him so that the limbs of the now completely crushed Miller actually flopped about. "Father, do not deceive me, do you hear? You cannot do it! See how embarrassed you are! You did not expect to hear the news of a fatal accident, you want to hide one from me. Tell me, I beseech you, whether my fears are well grounded."

The commercial counsellor trembled from head to foot.

"I am convinced," continued Louisa, "that you are trying to keep secret a danger that threatens me. I saw Hermann Frohberg alone here for a few moments. He was gloomy and apprehensive, uttered words that caused the blood to freeze in my veins, and when he heard you coming, he sent me away so that he might be alone with you; afterward I saw him go away. Where did he go to?"

"I do not know!" answered the commercial counsellor, hoarsely.

"He has confided a secret to you," spoke Louisa, becoming more passionate. "When I came rushing in here to you a few moments ago, you thought I brought you bad news, and you asked whether he was dead. Father," she cried, seized with sudden premonition of danger, "Frohberg is fighting a duel; his life is in jeopardy; I know it; I feel it!"

"Why, child," said her father, in a voice that was meant to be quieting, but which really sounded alarming, "I can't imagine how you got such ideas into your head."

"You can't imagine!" cried Louisa, squeezing his hands between hers. "Then you have divined nothing! You do not know, then, that I love him?"

"God help me!" ejaculated the severely tried Papa Miller. "That was all that was necessary to make my misfortunes complete!"

His body sank back helplessly in the chair like an inanimate thing.

"Then it is true?" cried Louisa, and, impelled by an inward fever and impatience, she sprang up again.

At that moment the servant entered and reported that Herr Karl von Frohberg and his wife had just arrived. The lady was already gone to Madame Miller's room, and the gentleman wished to speak with Herr Miller.

"The world is coming to an end to-day!" murmured Papa Miller. "The d—l! Heaven forgive me my sins. What brings Karl here to-day, I wonder?"

"What shall I say to Herrn von Frohberg?" asked the servant, respectfully.

"Will be pleased to see him," said the commercial counsellor, feebly and laboriously rising from his chair.

The servant disappeared.

"Compose yourself, for heaven's sake, compose yourself!" said Miller to his daughter, quickly, who, with rapid strides and anxious demeanor, walked up and down the room. "Frohberg, in all probability, is here only for a short call. What will he think if he sees you in such a state of excitement?"

Louisa endeavored to control herself.

A moment later, and the elder Frohberg entered the room.

"Good morning, my friend! Is not my brother here?" was his first query.

"I thought so!" mentally said little Miller, a chill running through him. "That's the way he begins! As I said, the world is coming to an end to-day! Your brother?" he then asked aloud, trying to master his feelings, and throwing an encouraging glance at Louisa; "your brother, Hermann?"

"Yes, of course, Hermann," returned the elder Frohberg, somewhat surprised. "Have I any other brother?"

"No, that's true," returned commercial counsellor Miller. "Pray excuse me; I was thinking."

"Well, is he not here? Have you not seen him?" asked Frohberg, further.

"Calm yourself!" whispered Miller to his daughter, who was in danger of betraying herself by her excited condition.

"Speak! What ails you? You look so frightened!" said Herr von Frohberg.

The commercial counsellor tried his utmost to master himself.

"Yes, to be sure!" he said. "Hermann was here for a few minutes, and then went away."

"And where did he go to?" asked Frohberg, who likewise now seemed to become alarmed.

"I don't know," returned the commercial counsellor.

"Did he not tell you?"

"No."

"That is very strange, indeed," said Herr von Frohberg, beginning to walk up and down the room.

"But why all these questions and apprehensions?" asked Miller, who was beginning to feel very uncomfortable.

"Because I have reason to fear," returned Frohberg. "Last night, on taking leave of him after the ball at Dr. Staberow's house, he told me that he had accepted an invitation to go hunting with a neighbor. But he seemed to be so distraught, so excited, that an inexplicable fear drove me to inquire of his servant for more particulars about this invitation. The servant knew nothing concerning it, and as I thus became still more alarmed I caused Hermann's rooms to be opened, and observed there, immediately upon entering, his double-barrelled gun, and the rest of his hunting outfit, in their proper places. You may judge how the presence of these things staggered me. I immediately returned home, and as my wife desired to call upon you I accompanied her hither, in the hope of obtaining an explanation of the strange conduct of my brother. But since he told you nothing of his intentions, I am totally at a loss how to explain his conduct, and am greatly alarmed about him."

"Oh!" exclaimed little Miller. "Really, you have no cause whatever to be alarmed."

"Why, how do you know?" asked Herr von Frohberg, quickly.

Miller became greatly embarrassed again.

"I meant to say that *I think* you have no cause."

Frohberg gazed upon his friend suspiciously.

His looks then fell upon Louisa, who stood with

her heated forehead leaning against the window pane, anxiously gazing out upon the garden.

"I hope to God you are right!" he said.

He then approached the young lady and asked her, as she had not, to his surprise, taken the least notice of him so far:

"What ails you, Louisa? You seem to be as excited as your father? Why do you stare so anxiously out of the window?"

Louisa started and quickly turned to Frohberg.

"Nothing ails me," she returned, barely able to control her fear. "My head aches from yesterday's ball. It seems to have agreed with none of us."

"Strange, very strange," said Frohberg, seating himself in a chair.

Several minutes passed in painful, anxious silence.

Louisa looked out at the window again; Herr Miller restlessly walked up and down the room, and Frohberg looked apprehensively first at one and then at the other.

It was so quiet in the room that the breathing of the three persons could be distinguished.

Outside the trees and bushes stood still and motionless ready to enjoy a most refreshing rain from the clouds that were gathering.

Suddenly there were heard two pistol shots quickly following each other, the sounds being somewhat weakened as if coming from a distance.

Almost instantaneously Louisa uttered a piercing scream, and half-fainting sank down upon a chair.

"What was that?" asked Karl von Frohberg, rising and casting a searching look upon the commercial counsellor.

"What? When?" said the latter, trying to appear unconcerned, while in truth his heart stood still from fright.

"Two pistol shots have just been fired off, I

should say, some ten minutes' walk from here," said Frohberg.

The commercial counsellor trembled like an aspen leaf at these words.

"Excuse me, they were rifle and not pistol shots," added he quickly and thoughtlessly.

Herr von Frohberg looked at him in surprise.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

Papa Miller was at a loss what to do from sheer embarrassment.

He would have liked very much for the earth to open itself under his feet and engulf him, and, still better, to have flown up to heaven, but as he was unable to do that, he had no other alternative but to cut as pitiable a figure as possible.

He was now totally disinclined to make any reply because he feared that he would only say something foolish and thus make things worse still.

"Oh, God, he is perhaps killed!" just then exclaimed Louisa, starting up from the dazed condition she was in and beginning to wring her delicate white hands.

"Killed?" asked Karl von Frohberg in dismay, turning to the frightened girl. "Who may be killed?"

"Hermann!" answered Louisa, mechanically, not thinking who it was that asked her that question. "He is fighting a duel probably with Baron Branco!"

The commercial counsellor started as if he was stung by a viper.

With two lateral strides, which seemed totally impossible for a person with such short legs as little Miller to accomplish, he gained his daughter's side, squeezed her arm and whispered to her to be silent and not betray her fears. But Herr von Frohberg could not be deceived now. He felt convinced that the words which Louisa had involuntarily allowed

to escape her contained the truth, and that an effort was made to keep it from him.

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Karl von Frohberg, almost distracted when the full force of Louisa's words dawned upon him. "But for what reason is he fighting this duel with the baron?"

Louisa now perceived how incautious she had been, and that she had informed the very person it was desirable to keep in ignorance of the affair.

"I don't know," she stammered, with the utmost confusion, casting her eyes down upon her lap.

"That poor girl is still so worked up from the ball that she doesn't know what she says," interjected the commercial counsellor, flattering himself with the thought that he had said something very smart. "You don't feel quite well, do you, Louisa?" he added, turning to his daughter.

His daughter did not answer because she did not know what to say.

In order to avoid any future meddling with the affair the little commercial counsellor betook himself to the furthest window and began to gaze into the garden with his mind in a chaotic condition, but to his misty vision it now appeared to have been entirely blotted out or bedecked with a coating of green paint.

Karl von Frohberg became more and more impatient and anxious, and with his head sunk upon his breast, walked up and down the room with hurried strides.

Just then the door turned upon its hinges, producing a slight, grating noise. Louisa, who had been listening with her heart, was the first to turn around, and, on beholding Hermann von Frohberg, she uttered a loud cry of joy.

The commercial counsellor and the elder Frohberg now likewise looked toward the door.

The latter, as soon as he beheld his brother, gave a deep sigh of relief, rapidly approached him, and said in a firm and calm voice:

"You have just fought a duel with Baron Branco, have you not?"

On beholding his brother so downcast and dispirited the legation counsellor was disposed to withdraw again, but when he found that he was seen, he boldly advanced toward him and replied with the utmost calmness:

"Yes, certainly!"

The elder Frohberg was silent for a moment, as if he was hurt at this nonchalant reply, and then he added, with a perceptible tinge of annoyance in his tones:

"It seems to me that everyone in this house has been initiated into the secret except me. And what makes the matter worse, the whole affair was purposely kept from me. Why this mysterious behavior toward me, if I may ask?"

"Because I wished to spare you anxiety," returned the legation counsellor, assuming a nonchalant air. "What would have been the use of alarming you unnecessarily?"

The elder brother doubtingly shook his head.

"You never had a secret from me before, dear brother," he said. "Why therefore—I must repeat the question—this first untruth of your whole life? The affair must be based upon a deeper and more important reason."

The legation counsellor was at a loss what reply to make and cast his eyes down before the searching gaze of his brother, while Louisa allowed no move to escape her of the man she loved.

"There is a secret between us two, Hermann," went on the elder Frohberg in a voice that went to one's heart, "between us two, who are not only

brothers but friends, and this latter status, in which we stand to each other, I value higher even than the first. I know you too well, Hermann, not to be able to conclude from your mysterious behavior, that, having a prior right, in a case of this kind to be your second, and you not according me that privilege, it can only be because you fought on my account, which undoubtedly is the case!" he added with the utmost conviction.

The legation counsellor became greatly embarrassed, and he sought in vain to cloak his embarrassment by outward calmness. Little Miller preferred to look out at the window again, and Louisa pressed her right hand upon her forehead as if to devise an explanation that would be deemed satisfactory.

"Hermann, answer me truthfully, you have fought on my account?" inquired the elder brother once more, in whose mind dark and vague fears seemed to be springing up.

"This is a very foolish, and a totally groundless assumption," returned the legation counsellor, evasively. "How can you think of such a thing?"

"Very well!" said Karl. "If you did not fight on my account, I see no reason why you should not tell me on whose account you fought?"

Hermann von Frohberg bit his lip, and was silent. He was in a very critical and unpleasant situation, indeed, and saw no way out of it.

At this moment, Louisa suddenly got up, and addressed herself to the elder Frohberg. "The duty now devolves upon me to speak, in order not to appear ungrateful to your brother. He did not fight for you, but for me!"

The legation counsellor started, and actually beamed upon the girl with delight.

"For you?" asked Karl von Frohberg, markedly surprised, while little Miller now again turned

around and smiled agreeably. "And how did that occur, if I may be allowed to ask?"

"Baron Branco had conducted himself toward me," replied Louisa, "in a manner which attracted considerable attention. The many visits of Madame Baldrian to our house made the affair still more conspicuous; papa and mamma, on the whole, were not indisposed to give their consent to the engagement, and I myself was in doubt, and only desired to consult my god-father and old friend, Herrn Hermann von Frohberg, in regard to this matter. I did so, and he not only advised me not to enter into an engagement with the baron, but personally informed him of my decision. Baron Branco, it seems, started reports to the effect that he had reasons for breaking off the engagement, and which reflected upon me. This is the reason why your brother has deemed it necessary to defend me, and out of feelings of delicacy has also kept my name from the public."

The little commercial counsellor came rolling like a ball toward the group.

"Now you have got the whole story," said he to Karl von Frohberg. "Now you see plainly enough that you had no reason to be alarmed."

The elder brother still shook his head doubtingly.

"I will not permit the least doubt to affect the explanation which you just stated, Louisa, but, assuming it to be perfectly true, I ask again, why make such a profound secret of a simple affair, and guard it so zealously from me, an old friend of the house?"

"Heavens! What a sceptic you are!" hotly cried the commercial counsellor, running both hands through his scanty hairs.

"Well, why then?" addressed himself the elder

Frohberg, smilingly, to the little man. "Maybe you will have the kindness to tell me?"

The commercial counsellor again became markedly embarrassed, and gazed stealthily at the legation counsellor and Louisa to see whether one of them would not help him out of his dilemma.

"Heavens!" he blurted out at last, not daring to prolong the silence any more. "That, too, is perfectly plain. It was out of regard for your health!"

"For my health?" asked the elder brother, smilingly.

"To be sure! Whose else?" burst out the little man, again, drawing up his shoulders very high, as if vexed at such manifest dulness of comprehension.

"Ah!" exclaimed Karl von Frohberg, bowing affably to little Miller, "I am exceedingly beholden to you for your tender considerations."

"Look here, now; don't treat us so ironically!" continued the commercial counsellor, who was now in full swing. "That is actually the case. The good Dr. Staberow recently told us that you had appeared to be in a very serious state of nervous irritation, and that he deemed all kinds of excitement dangerous to you. For this reason alone we unanimously resolved to spare you the horrible affair till it was disposed of. Are you convinced now?"

Karl von Frohberg was at a loss what to say, especially since he felt rather flattered at the considerations shown for his health.

"Hm, hm!" he muttered. "That good Dr. Staberow always exaggerates a little. I know of another instance where his diagnostic acumen did not prove correct."

"You are still disinclined to believe it, it seems," cried the commercial counsellor, greatly provoked.

"Oh, no," returned the elder brother, who, truth to say, still retained a modicum of distrust.

But after a little reflection, he added:

"It is rather unusual for one to fight a duel for his god-child or for his girl friend. The father being so much nearer to her, it is his place to defend her."

At this new turn of the conversation papa Miller made a wry face.

This time, however, Hermann von Frohberg helped him out of his embarrassment.

"I did not fight merely in behalf of a girl friend, but on account of my bride and future wife!"

Louisa uttered a low cry of delight.

The face of the commercial counsellor became serene again, as when the sun breaks forth from behind dark clouds.

"Here you have an additional conviction," cried he, with a comical mixture of pride and importance. "Of course, as her father, I would not have hesitated to punish the base defamer as he deserved; but since Louisa is Hermann's bride, and will be his wife, you will admit that I was *obliged* to give him precedence in the matter."

The legation counsellor meanwhile had advanced to Louisa and whispered to her:

"You will not contradict me, I hope!"

The girl placed her hand in his and overcome by her emotions, laid her head upon his shoulder.

"Do you love me, darling?" asked Hermann von Frohberg in a low voice.

"Passionately!" she breathed. "And you—do you love me likewise?" she added almost inaudibly.

The legation counsellor imprinted a kiss upon her forehead.

"Yes, ever so long!" he whispered back. "But it seems neither of us was aware of the true state

of our feelings till we almost simultaneously confessed to one another."

The elder Frohberg could doubt no longer. He approached the couple, tendered them his best wishes, and after heartily pressing his brother's hand in his, he added:

"This mutual inclination has existed for a long time then? And yet I never observed it at all! It is remarkable how blind one is sometimes!"

"Yes to you it is a surprise," chimed in again the little man, pretentiously. "How any one could have failed to notice such a thing, I am unable to conceive!"

"Oh, well, you are the father!" said Karl von Frohberg, apologetically. "It is altogether different in your case!"

"To be sure, it is altogether different in my case," repeated the commercial counsellor, rocking his head with the utmost self-sufficiency.

But on perceiving Louisa's smiling glance, who stood hand in hand with the legation counsellor, he became slightly embarrassed and had to drop his eyes like a bashful girl.

"What will Madame Baldrian say to this affair?" the elder Frohberg remarked after a brief pause.

"What do you mean?" asked papa Miller, in whose mind things were still a little disturbed.

"Because she did not make the match," said Frohberg, finishing the sentence.

The commercial counsellor turned up his round nose and scratched his head in embarrassment.

"She is here, even now!" he said.

"Where?" asked Karl von Frohberg, looking around the room.

"By my wife," returned Miller. "The servant told me so, a little while ago. She has a young gentleman with her."

At that moment voices could be heard of persons coming through the adjacent room.

"They are coming," said the commercial counsellor, retreating a little.

In a few moments Madame Baldrian, followed by Government Solicitor von Collin and Wanda, entered the parlor.

The gaze of the female advocate of marriages instantly fell upon Hermann and Louisa, whose demeanor to each other was such as she had never seen about them before.

She stood still and cast an inquiring glance upon papa Miller, who had hidden himself behind the elder Frohberg to escape being seen by her.

"I have the honor to present to you my future wife!" said the legation counsellor, bowing profoundly to the apostle of matrimony. "Louisa and I have just engaged ourselves!"

The matrimonial agent snapped her eyes, and threw back her head.

"Without me?" she asked, in a tone of offended dignity. "I trust it will not be followed by any ill effects!"

Afterward, however, she approached the newly-engaged couple and tendered them her formal congratulations.

"You see, my friend," said little Miller, joyfully, behind Karl von Frohberg, tapping him on the shoulder, "how everything is cleared up in the course of time! Having thus acquired a son, who is very acceptable to me, I have altogether four children."

"Three," corrected the elder Frohberg, facing his friend.

"Four! I certainly ought to know," protested Miller, making a remarkably shrewd face.

"And I maintain you have five!" said Madame Baldrian, coming forward.

The Commercial Counsellor Miller became frightened.

"Thunder and lightning!" he mentally exclaimed. "It isn't possible that she knows already, that—two at once—that would be too rough altogether. God save me from such a trial! I'll never take sea-baths again as long as I live!"

Herr von Collin now took Wanda's hand, advanced to the little man, and in a most agreeable manner said:

"Madame Baldrian was so gracious as to designate me as the fifth child, although I am not yet aware how that comes, but that has nothing to do with my affair, for I now take the liberty of asking of you for the hand of your daughter, Fräulein Wanda. Your wife and daughter have already been so kind as to give their consent."

An awful load fell from the spirit of the little Commercial Counsellor Miller.

"God be praised!" he mentally exclaimed. "If it is nothing worse than that! I really thought that that woman had already found out—but that would have been altogether too bad and too ridiculous!"

Then he spoke aloud to the solicitor, who stood awaiting a reply.

"Then it was you who was by my wife? Well, since my wife does not object, then of course I——"

Here, however, he interrupted himself, as if a troublesome thought had just occurred to him, and he dexterously manœuvred to gain Madame Baldrian's side, into whose ear he whispered:

"You have told him distinctly that the dowry has been diminished again, have you not?"

Hymen's agent nodded.

"Well, then, since my wife does not object," papa

Miller commenced again, "I don't either; I like your appearance and I——"

"He has inherited two hundred thousand dollars from his uncle!" whispered Madame Baldrian at this point into his ear.

The commercial counsellor was agreeably surprised.

"I like your appearance *very well* indeed," he went on, addressing himself to solicitor von Collin. "Well then, take her and make her happy!" he added, stooping a little to imprint a kiss upon his daughter's forehead.

But at that moment the impetuous Wanda jumped from her chair toward him and his nose collided quite severely with her head.

When she looked up to him the tears were streaming from his eyes.

"Please don't cry, papa!" begged the wild creature, thinking the tears were an expression of joy on his part instead of pain. "I am not crying either!"

"Never mind, child, never mind! It will soon pass over!" said the commercial counsellor, turning away for the purpose of drying his tears.

Madame Baldrian, impelled by curiosity which cast into the shadow even the sense of injury, now approached the legation counsellor and Louisa to learn how the affair came about so quietly and without her intercession; and Wanda took her intended to the window where they interchanged the first tender manifestations, frequently glancing around to see whether they were observed by anyone.

"Well, when will the wedding, or rather the weddings, take place?" asked the elder Frohberg, "for I intend to remove to the country with my family soon and would like to arrange it so as to be present at this double family festival."

Little Miller, who had already been looking perfectly happy, now made a sad face.

"Both my children will be taken from me at once!" he murmured gloomily to himself.

Madame Baldrian came to his side with a smile upon her face and a twinkle in her eye.

"You still have a little one in reserve!" she whispered into his ear.

The commercial counsellor nodded, and in silent pleasure rubbed his hands.

"That's so!" he murmured in a low voice. "After all, this remarkable affair has also some good points about it."

The elder Frohberg now wished to withdraw for the purpose of calling for his wife, who was still with Madame Miller, to whom he desired to tender his congratulations.

The legation counsellor and Louisa followed him to present themselves as an engaged couple to the mother of the affianced young lady, with little Miller bringing up the rear, and the matrimonial agent took her leave, as she had many important matters to attend to yet.

Only Herr von Collin and Fräulein Wanda remained in utter blissfulness hidden in the recess of the window, and when a little later the mid-day meal reunited the family some of them had less appetite than at any time during their lives.

Love satiates one, but one soon becomes hungry again.

CHAPTER XVII.

RARRER'S GREAT DEED.

On the afternoon of the same day Madame Baldrian sat in her room and read the announcements of the engagements and marriages in the newspaper.

She hardly ever read anything else. Births had no interest for her, for the subjects were too young to be of any use, and deaths only in so far as it would be possible for her to arrange marriages between the resulting widows and widowers.

On examining the room somewhat more closely a number of peculiarities might have been noticed.

The window curtains were not of white lace or white cotton stuff, such as are usually found in ladies' apartments, but red and blue, the colors of love and faithfulness, from which it could be seen that Madame Baldrian possessed more solid principles than she was usually credited with.

It is often possible to judge of the character of the occupant of a room from the manner in which he or she furnished and arranged it. The carpet was likewise blue and red, with a few scattered white flowers, which was, perhaps, intended to denote how rare innocence is.

Green, the color of hope, was not represented in the room at all. Madame Baldrian, as we have said, took very little interest in prospective matters.

The walls of the chamber were covered with many steel engravings, all of them representing engagements and marriages.

There was to be seen the marriage of Napoleon with Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie, Peter I. of

Russia with Martha Rabe, subsequently Empress Catherine I.; Erich XIV. of Sweden with the beautiful Court Lady Mans, and many others.

The floor was almost entirely covered by a large carpet, which was not nailed down, but, after the latest fashion, merely spread out loosely, a narrow strip only, near the walls, remaining exposed. In its centre was represented, in life-size figures, the ceremony of the marriage of the Doge of Venice to the Adriatic Sea.

After the agent of the god Hymen had read carefully through the marriages and the engagements she put the paper away, and, as if dissatisfied with herself, murmured while looking down upon the animated street below:

"That's really too bad that I should have failed to consummate the engagement between Hermann and Louisa. I think I ought to be ashamed of myself. I have been visiting that house for ever so many years, brought about an engagement between Solicitor von Collin and little Wanda with a great deal of trouble and labor, and yet completely overlooked the growing attachment between the eldest sister and her godfather. Really it seems as if it is becoming more difficult for me to accomplish anything of late," she added, after reflecting gloomily for awhile. "The time for quick conclusions and keen resolutions seem to have gone by. Things I formerly accomplished with the utmost ease, I now find very difficult to do. Is my star declining? Have I reached the end of my renowned career, like Napoleon after his unfortunate expedition to Russia, during which his whole army was frozen?"

Hymen's agent for the promotion of matrimonial combinations rested her head in her white, soft hand and reflected:

"Nothing, however, is frozen in me," she went on,

after a lengthy silence. "Impediments may occur in every industry and profession, and yet the guiding spirit need not be the cause of them. This one defeat shall not put a period to my usefulness. I will not be discouraged nor lose hope," she added, bracing herself up energetically. "When one loses confidence in herself, she cannot expect to succeed in any undertaking."

The eye of Madame Baldrian glowed again with its wonted fire, but its glow quickly began to subside, and presently she stared with the same degree of dejection on the street below.

"I feel very queer to-day," she began once more. "A net seems to have been cast around my heart, like a premonition of some evil which I shall not be able to escape. Is it possible that I am really at the turn of my life, or, still worse, at the end of it?"

A deep sigh escaped from the breast of the matrimonial agent.

"Death sometimes overtakes one quickly," she intoned to herself; "well for those whose accounts in life are always settled."

A tear dropped from the eye of the marriage instigator upon her silken robe.

"Is this a tear of pain or of joy?" said she sadly. "Will it be the only one or followed by many 'glistening sisters,' as our charming Henry Heine expresses himself?"

The match-maker remained lost in thought, then, upon a sudden resolve, she raised her head and said the words with the same defiant ring in her voice as Parthenia in "The Son of the Wilderness:"

"I will cry no more!"

And having fully regained her old energy and determination, she continued:

"Let come what will, the contingencies of des-

tiny shall find me prepared for every occasion. I have suffered this forenoon in the house of the commercial counsellor a humiliating defeat, and in order to convince myself that I possess as much capability as ever I will this very day put it to the test. Before the sun goes down another happy couple shall be added to the inhabitants of this bright and beautiful world. The ground work has already been laid and if fortune will smile but a little upon my efforts it will not even be necessary for me to rise from this chair in order to unite two hands in conjugal felicity."

After these remarks the apostle for the promulgation of the gospel of matrimony pulled the bell cord that hung within the reach of her hand.

A few minutes later a female form appeared whose sex no one would have been able to designate were it not for the fact that she had on female apparel and evidently was a cook.

The creature looked like the most uncouth farm laborer, who took it into his head to go to a ball masked in the garb of a female cook.

She was of a large man's stature and the visible parts of the body were of Herculean size. The shoulders were remarkably broad and strong, and the fiery red naked arms were surely able to carry a full grown calf. The trunk was surmounted by a large head, overgrown with black, shaggy hair; the cheeks were livid and puffy, the eyes small, but had a good-natured expression about them, amounting almost to simplicity, and which had nothing in common with the savage-looking mustache that shaded the thick upper lip.

"Did madame ring?" asked the colossal female in a deep, masculine, bass voice, while the eyes glanced about childishly, as if to say: 'Fear not, I will not hurt you!'

"Yes, Rosa!" said the mistress. "I am sorry to say I haven't made much progress in your affair, notwithstanding all the trouble I have taken."

The colossal creature made a face as if she was about to cry.

"The men are constantly becoming more difficult to suit," continued Madame Baldrian, "they demand more now than ever."

"Oh, Heavens, I am willing to do anything," said the giantess, in a mournful voice.

The matrimonial agent smiled.

"So far I have always succeeded in marrying off all my servant girls," she went on, "and it will go very hard indeed if I don't succeed in your case too. You have scarcely any clothes, and saved nothing——"

"Because I am always so hungry, Madame Baldrian," said Rosa, interrupting her mistress.

"And, in addition, you are not very pretty," the latter added, in a tone that could easily be heard how hard it was for her to utter the words.

The colossus now cried in earnest.

"That is true, that I am not very pretty," said the giantess, "but I would be so good to him, so good!" she added, with a sudden outburst of ardor, amounting almost to frenzy, making a movement as if she would crush someone in her Herculean arms.

"Come, come," said Madame Baldrian, motioning with her hand to pacify her ardent cook. "Don't be so violent. I believe you!"

At this slight reproof, the cheeks of the female colossus became livid, she cast down her eyes, fumbled confusedly with her apron-strings, and rotating the gigantic upper part of her body, like a little girl that is in a pet, said:

"But I am not to blame if I like the men so much!" she added, with another ebullition of furious passion, going through the same crushing movement as before.

Hymen's agent was obliged to turn away her head to avoid laughing a-loud.

"Now, for several days, I have resorted to a measure which I do not, as a rule, like to make use of," said she, after a little while. "I have advertised for you in the newspaper."

Rosa jumped for joy, and when she came down again upon the floor all the plates, the cups, and the saucers in the closet trembled, the furniture shook, and Madame Baldrian involuntarily grasped the arms of her chair to keep from falling.

"Rosa!" she cried, "take care, the ceiling will fall down upon people's heads below us." And then she went on again in her friendly-protectoral tone.

"I have, then, advertised in the newspaper to the effect that a poor but virtuous girl——"

"Yes, I can swear to that by all the heavenly powers!" cried the colossal girl, stretching out an arm like a tower toward the ceiling.

"One not exactly beautiful, but all the more faithful, and affectionate," continued the matrimonial agent.

"Yes, oh, yes, I'll be so good to him, so good," cried the cook again, shaking her clinched fists as if she would like to smash somebody or something.

"Who seeks a life companion. Particulars will be supplied at my residence," said Madame Baldrian, as she completed the reading of the advertisement.

"Oh, if one would only come, if one would only come!" cried the colossal cook with such vehement passion again that it would have required a very

brave man not to have become panic-stricken at the thought of calling such a creature his own.

At that instant the house-bell rang.

Rosa made a movement as if she wanted to leap in the air again.

"No jumping, no jumping!" admonished the match-maker, in a low but firm voice.

"Maybe it is a man!" whispered the giant cook, beaming for joy, stopping short in the attempt at jumping.

"Be still!" commanded her mistress.

Again the bell rang, but stronger and louder.

"How impatient he is!" cried the colossal girl. "He must be in an awful hurry—don't you think so, Madame Baldrian?"

"Go and open the door, see who it is and what is wanted!" said the latter impatiently.

The colossus started to execute the commands of her mistress.

The bell rang a third time, lasting at least a minute.

On the way Rosa turned around and made a movement as if she would like to fly. But, at the behest of her mistress to go on, she turned about once more and left the room.

When, in the course of a few minutes, she returned she made a face from which Madame Baldrian was unable to say whether it denoted joy, disappointment, or anything else.

"Well?" she asked, impatiently.

The colossal girl shrugged her gigantic shoulders, and did not answer.

"Who is it?" asked her mistress.

The giantess shrugged her shoulders once more.

"Is it a man?"

"Yes; at least he so appears to me," answered Rosa, her countenance again assuming an animated friendly expression.

"You are certainly able to distinguish a man from a woman, are you not?" said the matrimonial agent, somewhat provoked.

"It is not a woman!" returned the colossal cook, positively.

"I really think you have lost your reason through your marriage affair, you stupid thing you!" cried Madame Baldrian, angrily. "Didn't you ask whom you had the honor to announce?"

Rosa nodded.

"Well, then, what is his name?" asked the mistress, further.

"I don't know," replied the colossal girl. "When I asked him for his name, he made such a horrible face that I became anxious and frightened."

"It is not an ape, is it?" asked Madame Baldrian, anxiously.

"Oh, Heavenly Father! don't frighten me so!" cried Rosa, holding her big open hands before her eyes.

"Didn't he speak at all?"

"Yes, of course he spoke," returned the cook, "and therefore it can't be an ape. He told me distinctly and sensibly that he wanted to see Madame Baldrian, but when I asked him for his name he seemed to be seized with a spasm, and then he made such a horrible face that he did not look like a human being at all."

Madame Baldrian reflected for a moment.

"I presume it is some jolly devil who wants to have some fun with this big goose!" mentally said the lady. "At any rate, I must see him, for he undoubtedly comes in response to the advertisement in the *Intelligence* newspaper. Tell the gentleman that I beg him to come in," said she, addressing herself to the cook. "And as regards yourself, go back to the kitchen as soon as you have shown him

in here, and under no circumstances must you disturb our conversation. If you do you may spoil everything."

"Do you think, Madame Baldrian, that he comes to see me?" Rosa asked, shyly, before leaving the room.

"I judge so," returned the match-maker.

"I wish he hadn't made me such a terrible face!" said the girl, shuddering. "If I am good to my husband, there is no occasion for him to frighten me."

Then, upon a commanding wink from her mistress, Rosa went to the door.

Madame Baldrian quickly spread out the skirt of her dress as much as possible, leaned back serenely in her chair, and, with a lovely smile on her lips, waited for the person who was to come in.

Suddenly she heard a loud noise, and on directing her glance toward the door, she saw a man, lying stretched out at full length upon the floor, who evidently had stumbled over the loose carpet.

"I wanted to enjoy the pleasah of calling on you!" said the stranger, still prone upon the floor, but in a pleasant tone of voice.

"Delighted to see you," returned Madame Baldrian greatly annoyed at the strange occurrence. "Won't you rise and take a seat?"

"You ahe vewy kind," groaned Rarrer, with difficulty rising from the floor and picking up his hat, which in falling he had flattened like a pancake.

He then sat down upon a chair offered him by the lady.

Despite the fact that Rarrer had drank a whole bottle of wine before setting out upon this visit, in order to have the required amount of courage, he was nevertheless not in a condition, in the presence of Madame Baldrian, to initiate the con-

versation, nor even to continue it. He merely sat there twirling his flattened hat between his hands and every now and then looked at the lady as if he wanted to say something; but the moment she looked at him his glance dropped to the floor, and he became greatly embarrassed.

When Madame Baldrian became convinced that the young man was not disposed to begin the conversation she resolved to take the initiative.

"Doubtless you come in reference to a certain affair," said she, very affably, accenting the words.

Rarrer looked very much surprised.

"A certain affaih?" said he mentally. "How can this woman know what I have told to no one? Does she possess any supehnatuwal powahs? At any wate, it will be well foh me to be vewy cautious and diplomatic, so that my gweat plan is not spoiled. To listen and not to speak is now my main task!"

Hence Rarrer did not speak, and only made a peculiar movement which might just as well have been taken for an affirmative as a negative expression.

Madame Baldrian took it as an affirmative expression.

"And your haste was only a proof of the excusable interest which you take in the matter?" she added, with the same affability.

Rarrer repeated his twofold meaning movement, but mentally he said:

"The d——l may understand what she means by that, I don't. But patience and I will soon find out where she is dwiving to!"

"After all, I can only tell you what you know already," continued the match-maker.

"I don't know anything," mentally said the young man. "But patience, patience!"

"Now, since you have already seen——" went on

the matrimonal agent, roguishly bowing to him and gazing into his eyes with a peculiarly enchanting look.

As Rarrer was always a very agreeable fellow, and, in addition, just now was very much embarrassed, he therefore bowed, too, but not roguishly, simply awkwardly.

"I haven't the least idea what she means by saying that I have alweady seen," mentally said he.

"And since you like her ——" continued the preacher of the gospel of matrimony, still more affably and roguishly.

The youth bowed again.

"Then we can easily settle the matter," said she.

Rarrer looked at her with staring eyes. Mentally he said: "I am quite weady to settle the matteh with you, though I can't imagine what you mean," while his face became overcast with a sinister expression.

"If agreeable to you——" insinuatingly said the agent, rising from her seat.

"With pleasuah!" returned Rarrer, likewise rising, his countenance gloomy, pulling up his kid glove.

Madame Baldrian regarded him with a beaming face.

"Please wait one minute!" said she, in dulcet tones, preparing to leave.

Rarrer unconsciously took a step toward her and raised his right hand.

The weaver of the sweet chains of matrimony smiled roguishly and bowed to him profoundly.

"Wait only one minute, please!" she repeated, with a seductive glance from her divine orbs.

And then, quick as a flash, she turned and left the room.

Rarrer remained standing in the centre of the

room, with his hand raised and a sinister expression upon his countenance.

"The favowable moment is lost!" he murmured, sadly, his courage seemingly oozing out of him with the disappearance of the match-maker. "Weally, it seems vewy hahd to get the best of heh," he continued, brooding darkly. "She is as sleepewy as an eel, but the deed will, nevehtheless, be accomplished when she wetuhns."

Having delivered himself of this speech, his forehead became wrinkled still more, his face assumed a still darker expression, and he folded his arms across his breast, inclined his head forward, and strutted up and down the room, lost in deep thought.

He seemed to have already forgotten his surroundings when the door was noislessely opened a little and two female heads peered into the room. They were those of the matrimonial agent and of her herculean cook, Rosa.

"Is it really true?" whispered the Colossus into the ear of her mistress.

"Yes," the agent whispered. "He came for you, immediately took a fancy to you, and is waiting now to tell you everything himself, which no doubt will be much sweeter and more delightful to you than if I told you."

The giantess cook was on the point of shouting for joy, but Madame Baldrian clapped a hand upon her mouth in the nick of time.

"Will you be still?" she said. "A girl must never display her feelings to a man too soon, and above all things not in such a vehement manner!"

"What may he be thinking of?" asked Rosa, whose head was actually swelling with the passionate excitement that was boiling in her.

"He is most probably preparing a speech which

he will deliver to you upon your entrance!" replied the match-maker. "It will be splendid, Rosa!"

The colossal spinster wanted to kiss her mistress, from an ebullition of blissful frenzy, but the latter by an adroit movement averted it.

"You must behave yourself till I introduce you," said the latter.

"I can't stand it any longer!" gasped the giantess squeezing her glowing and massive head more and more into the partly open doorway.

Rarrer still walked up and down the room lost in thought; now he struck his heart with his right hand like a gloomy tragedian who thrusts a dagger into his manly breast.

"What is he doing now?" asked the colossal woman who presided over the agent's culinary department.

"He seems to have reached the point when he relates to you in fiery words his love and his tenderness for you," returned Madame Baldrian.

That was too much for the gigantic love-struck Rosa. Uttering a cry like a wild beast that furiously rushes upon its prey, she tore open the door, almost knocking her mistress down, rushed upon Rarrer, who just then had his back turned toward her, seized him like a child with her herculean arms and kissed and hugged him till his five senses left him.

"Rosa!" cried the matrimonial agent after she had somewhat recovered from her surprise, "what are you doing? Control yourself, I beg of you!"

"But I can't control myself any more!" cried the colossal creature, squeezing and hugging poor Rarrer. "I am so fond of the dear little darling, so fond of him!" she added with passionate ecstasy, kissing Rarrer till his lips and teeth ached.

"Help!" cried the unhappy youth when he got

a chance to breathe. "Save me! I can't stand it any longah!"

"Can't you stand it any longer either, my dear little darling?" cried the love-frenzied giantess. "Then you are so fond of me, hey? I'll show you how fond I am of you!"

And then she threw him up in the air as if he was a chip of wood, and caught him again in her muscular arms.

"Help! Save me!" cried again the maltreated, unhappy young man. "She will destwoy me! Muhdah! wobbahs!"

"May I take him into the kitchen for a little while, Madame Baldrian?" asked the colossal girl, beaming with joy, addressing herself to her mistress.

On hearing this request on the part of the gigantic Rosa, Rarrer exerted all his powers to extricate himself from her powerful arms.

"No!" he cried in mortal dread. "You can't take me into the kitchen, noh any otheh place, you hovvible thing!"

And despite the efforts of the giantess to retain him in her embrace, he succeeded, by kicking with his feet, and beating with his hands, in escaping from her clutches, but not until he was completely exhausted, when he fell upon the floor like one dead.

"Rosa! Rosa!" kept on the matrimonial agent, calling to her cook, provoked in the highest degree, "what are you doing? Are you crazy? Why don't you give the young gentleman time to say what he wants? He intends to marry you, but you ought to give him time to ask you for your hand!"

Meanwhile Rarrer had managed to get upon his feet again.

"This seems to be a weal wobbah's den!" he groaned, examining his ribs. "Why did you allow

this she-devil to maltweat me so?" cried he, addressing himself to the mistress of the Amazonian cook.

Rosa turned deathly pale when she heard Rarrer bestow upon her that uncomplimentary term.

"I protest against your using such terms to this young woman," returned the matrimonial agent, in an earnest and disapproving tone. "I think it is decidedly reprehensible in you to use such an expression to a person you were disposed to give your hand to, which, of course, makes it impossible for the contemplated engagement to take place now. What the girl has done is only an evidence of her great love for you, which any man would not only excuse, but be proud of, and not repay with such insulting and obnoxious terms. Go back to the kitchen, Rosa," said she, then turning to her cook, "You will never see this man again!"

The colossal girl sobbed in an alarming manner.

"Oh what a pity!" she cried. "I am so fond of him!"

"You will find another who is more worthy of you!" said Madame Baldrian, and then she repeated in the strict voice of a mistress who permits no contradiction: "Go to your room now!"

Rosa obeyed, and walked away, sobbing as if her heart would break.

The marriage missionary stood before Rarrer like an angry goddess.

"You have just broken a heart that was inexpressibly devoted to you!" said she, with tragic dignity. "Was it for that purpose you came here, sir?"

Rarrer stared at the promoter of connubial bliss in the greatest surprise.

"Excuse me," he returned, in a firm but repellent tone; "I *did not* come heah foh the puhpose of

bweaking hearts, and I want to have nothing to do with that cwazy woman."

"What?" asked Madame Baldrian, surprised in turn. "Did you not come on account of the marriage notice which I caused to be inserted in the *Intelligence* paper?"

Rarrer's countenance assumed an expression of ineffable contempt.

"I am not a man who is attwacted by mawiage advehtisements!" said he, drawing himself up proudly, and like a Girondist, flinging his compressed hat under his left arm.

"Then what brings you to me, if I may ask?" spoke the advocate of matrimony, somewhat annoyed at the mistake and its effects.

Rarrer seemed now to be gathering up all the strength he could muster; for he drew himself up proudly, threw his head back slightly, and was just about to begin to talk when he became somewhat frightened, and quickly looked around.

Madame Baldrian regarded the conduct of her strange visitor in silent amazement.

Rarrer soon regained his self-possession, and turned once more to the marriage plotter, determined now to execute his long-cherished project, so he took a step forward, put his right hand under his frock-coat, and opened his mouth to speak, when he again became frightened and looked behind him,

"He is a very strange man, and I am beginning to feel uncomfortable in his presence!" mentally said the matrimonial agent.

However, she took heart, and with forced amiability asked:

"May I have the honor to learn what your name is?"

The question seemed to affect the young man very unpleasantly, but he seemed to be imbued to-

day with a rare degree of self-possession. Instantly he pinched together his eyelids, distorted his face in a spasmodic manner, and opened his mouth so far that the root of the tongue could be seen.

"Oh!" cried the marriage promoter, frightened, recoiling several steps.

Rarrer closed his mouth and opened his eyes, and gazed at the lady very much astonished.

"Heavens! I hope he is not crazy! Really he looks as if he wanted to bite me!" mentally said Madame Baldrian, retreating still farther.

Just then the bell rang.

The interruption seemed to please the lady, but to displease the young man.

Both waited with the greatest impatience to see what was going to happen.

A few minutes later the colossal cook appeared, with a tear-stained face and reddened eyes, handed Madame Baldrian a letter, burst out in spasmodic sobbing anew on beholding Rarrer, and then disappeared again in an adjacent chamber.

"Excuse me!" said the matrimonial agent to the strange young man, glancing at the superscription on the envelope and then breaking the seal.

"Cehtainly. Don't let me hindah you!" said Rarrer, bowing pleasantly.

The female apostle of matrimony went over to the window, unfolded the letter, and began to read it.

Already at the first few words, her face underwent a great change, and it soon assumed an alarming expression. And the further she read the more her fears grew, for she turned pale and glanced over her letter in a stealthy manner at Rarrer, who, proudly, had drawn himself up again, and seemed to be resolved upon some heroic deed.

But, on throwing his head backward a little, a sudden fright overtook him again, and he looked

around like a person who fears that someone behind him is about to do him an injury.

Madame Baldrian trembled.

"How anxious and apprehensive he is constantly looking around," said she, mentally, "as if he is troubled with an evil conscience, or imagines that he is watched. Is it possible that this is the very young man against whom this anonymous writer warns me?"

With rapid and burning looks she glanced over the following lines once more:

"An excited young man will call upon you one of these days, who has some evil intentions against you. Be on your guard!"

"He is certainly young and excited, too. But what evil intentions can he have against me?" reflected Madame Baldrian, in the depths of her soul. "I would like to ring for Rosa to protect me, but, with her love for the rogue, she would in all probability take his part against me!"

Rarrer took another step toward her, and again thrust his right hand inside the left flap of his frock-coat, like an actor who is about to deliver a speech.

The matrimonial agent retreated behind a little table.

"He must be a thief!" she said, mentally. "He is going to attack me now—place a loaded revolver to my breast, and rob me of my money!"

Rarrer advanced another step. His face expressed a firm, unalterable determination, and his eye glistened with the fire of a fanatic.

The matrimonial agent cried out from fear. In feverish haste and with trembling hands, she snatched her well-filled purse from the pocket of her dress, and threw it at him.

"There, take it!" she cried, in tones of the greatest alarm. "That is all that I have at present."

Rarrer kicked back the purse with his foot, contemptuously, and his countenance assumed an expression of deep insult.

"What do you take me foh?" said he, with inimitable dignity. "Do you think I am a thief oh a wobbah? Oh, how you have been mistaken in me!"

After these remarks his whole being, impelled by the influence of some powerful resolution, seemed to be roused to the highest pitch of determination, he took another long step forward, stretched out his arm, his eye became illuminated, and his breast heaved vehemently.

"This is vewy stwange!" murmured he, with trembling lips.

"What is strange?" asked the match-maker. Although terribly frightened, she still retained a certain degree of nervous curiosity.

"Someone is constantly stwiking me on the back of the head," answered Rarrer, in a low voice, "and when I look awound I see no one."

"He is crazy!" mentally said Madame Baldrian. "If I could only get out of this room!"

She then gave a jump from behind the table, and had almost reached the door.

"Stay!" cried Rarrer, leaping suddenly forward and thus getting between her and the door.

"What do you want of me, you horrible man?" asked the lady, almost frightened to death. "If you do not want my money, is it your intention to murder me?"

"Oh, no!" declared Rarrer, whose courage and resolution now seemed to be fully worked up. "It is just the wewese. I do not intend to muhdah you, but to wob you."

"Then, for heaven's sake, take the purse and go!" exclaimed the match-maker, attempting to pick it up from the floor.

"Leave it theah!" said Rarrer, restraining her by a motion of the hand.

He then seemed to work himself into a vehement state of excitement, his eyes rolled wildly in his head, his bosom heaved, and his nostrils became dilated.

Had Rarrer gazed into a mirror and seen how he looked, he would certainly have been frightened.

"What do you want, you horrible man?" cried the matrimonial agent, again. "Take everything I have got, but go, go!"

"I don't want youah money, noh youah pwopehty," returned Rarrer, in a subdued, passionately hot voice. "I want something mohe valuable!"

Madame Baldrian opened her eyes to their utmost, and stared at him with a horrified expression of countenance.

The young man advanced another step toward her.

"I must and will possess you!" he went on, in a lower voice, but with more vehemence. "I want to mawy you!" he added, passionately.

The matrimonial agent opened her mouth, pressed her hands upon her breast, uttered a low moan, and sank down upon a chair, as if in a faint.

Rarrer gazed upon her with a peculiar gleam in his eye.

"If the sudden joy has killed heh, it will, on the whole, be the best thing that could happen to both of us," said he to himself, sadly, in a low voice; "albeit, as twue as God lives, the thought nevah occuhed to me to injuh her. I am only desihwous of sacwificing myself in ohdeh to make heh hahmless in the fuchuh."

Rarrer tiptoed toward her.

"I wandah whetheh she is weally dead," he continued. "Theh ahe vawious ways of ascertaining that point. Thus, if a miwoh is held to heh mouth, and

it wemains unclouded, it pwoves that she is dead. Oh, a feathah undeh heh nose, and if it is motionless, it is also a suah sign of death. Oh, laying a hand upon the heaht to feel whetheh it beats."

Rarrer glanced around the room to see whether he could find the necessary articles.

"Theah is no small miwoh to be seen anywheah," reflected Rarrer, "and I cehtainly can't hold that big, heavy wococo miwoh to heh mouth. I must ascehtain whethah heh healht beats. No miwoh is necessawy foh that, only the hand." He stretched out his dexter member to make the experiment, but pulled it back before touching her, and blushed.

"No!" said he, eyeing the upper part of the lady's body, "I do not know how to do it, noh do I think that it is pwopeh. I must twy the featheh test."

Again his gaze wandered about the room, and he discovered a goose-quill among some writing materials.

Stealthily he tiptoed to the desk, took the quill, hurried back, and held the stiff end under the lady's nose.

He held it for a long time, and watched it carefully, but it remained perfectly motionless.

"She is dead!" gasped Rarrer. "The suhpwise has killed heh. The gods do not want me to sacwifice myself!" he went on after a pause, in a low voice. "They have taken the deah cweatuh to theih ahms instead of me, and will pweseve heh betteh than I could have done it. One must be satisfied with whateveh happens, and he must submit to the inevitable!"

Rarrer sighed, and was busy trying to restore his flattened hat into shape again, when he suddenly started and turned as pale as a corpse.

He now gave up the attempt to smooth out his hat, allowed his arms to fall to his sides impotently,

and cast a horrified look upon the still motionless Madame Baldrian.

"Gwacious heavens!" he moaned, "I was the only pehson in the woom when she died! I'll suhly be taken foh heh muhdeweh! If I should call in that cwazy cook of hehs, I'll only make things woss, foh that cweatuh will sooneh testify against me than foh me. Although nothing could be pwoven against me diwectly, still it will look vewy bad foh me. With my usual ill luck they might even find sufficient evidence to convict me of foul muhdeh and execute me! Howevah wetched my life has been, still the thought of being twied and hung as a muhdewah is too howible to beah. I must seek my safety in flight. That cwazy woman," he went on with his soliloquy, "may come in at any moment, and I must thehfoh get out of this woom without any delay!"

Suddenly his wandering glances fell upon the window. With fear and trembling he stealthily crawled close up to it and looked out.

"It is not high!" he went on. "I think I can wisk it, no one will see me if I get out this way!"

Carefully and cautiously he opened it and put out his head for the purpose of reconnoitring the surroundings.

"Thehe is no one living in the cellah of this house," he continued, "so that I need not feah anyone seizing my foot and pulling my boot off, as happened to me in Majoh W—W—Wumpel's wesidence."

He cast a hasty glance up and down the street, quickly and dexterously threw his right leg over the window-sill, and was in the act of following it up with his left, when he suddenly felt a violent tug at his coat tails behind him that completely arrested his progress.

Rarrer became stiff and motionless from fear. Wild, harrowing thoughts chased each other in a chaotic mass through his agonized mind.

"It is all up with me now!" he murmured. "My attempt at flight will be wegahded as evidence of guilt! I pwesume it is that cwazy woman who is holding me."

But the instinct of self-preservation blazed anew in him with lightning-like rapidity, and took entire possession of him.

"I must fight foh life now!" he went on, muttering to himself. "Fohwahd! Behind me is death and destwuction!"

He clutched at the window-sill, made a desperate effort to release himself, but at the moment when he exerted all his strength to get away, he was jerked backward so violently that, in an instant, he found himself lying on the carpet inside the room.

"It is all up with me now!" he groaned, with closed eyes, as if to shut out some dread calamity. "If this cwazy cook would only stwangle me at once, so that I might be spahed the disgwace of being twied and executed for muhdeh!"

"You young hot-head, you!" said a tender, passionate female voice, which Rarrer instantly recognized as that of Madame Baldrian. "What are you up to? Who would be so foolish as to take his life hastily and lose hope! One should never give up hoping, especially in his dealings with the ladies."

Rarrer groaned.

"Heavens, how he suffers!" whispered the matrimonial agent to herself. Then she said aloud:

"Is it actually true? And do you really love me so passionately?"

"Yes!" replied the youth, who was again transported into an ecstatic delight by the sudden turn in his fate. "Yes, I weally love you to distwaction!"

He then rallied from his unpoetic attitude and kneeled before the lady.

The latter likewise seemed to have been suddenly overcome by similar emotions, and which she for herself had long ago renounced—for she allowed her round, shapely head, with its mass of "scrambled bangs" overhanging her brow, to droop forward, and her plump, white fingers to meander in happy blissfulness about Rarrer's coarse and curly hair.

"Oh!" she cried, suddenly withdrawing her hand, and putting a plump, white finger into her mouth.

Rarrer thought some new misfortune had happened, and he quickly looked up.

"Have you got any thorns or needles in your head?" asked the contriver of marital affiliations, sucking her bruised finger. "I have pricked my finger, and it is bleeding."

"Whetheh I have any thohns oh needles in my head?" repeated Rarrer, looking surprised, and examining the back of his head with his right hand.

But who can describe his astonishment when he discovered a long comb sticking in his hair?

"What is that?" asked Madame Baldrian, astonished.

"A comb!" replied the young man, very carefully examining the article.

"Are you a hair-dresser, that you carry a comb in your hair?" asked the matrimonial schemer.

"I am not a haiah-dwessah!" returned the young man, with a slightly injured air.

Suddenly he happened to remember something.

"That could only happen to me!" he went on. "I got shaved a while ago, and the bahbeh left his comb in my haiah."

The lovely relict of the Merchant Baldrian laughed.

"That's what stwuck me in the head wepeatedly and made me suppose that theah was someone behind me," went on Rarrer.

The matrimonial agent seemed entirely satisfied with this explanation, and she asked, in a tone easy enough to perceive that she was ready to answer it herself:

"Then you are no thief nor robber?"

"How can you think of such a thing?" said the young man, looking up in surprise.

"I certainly would not have believed it if I had not received an anonymous letter warning me against a young man, and which excited great fears in me."

But suddenly she stopped fondling the kneeling youth, and blushed crimson. She drew back a little, and with genuine or affected modesty muttered, half-audibly:

"What am I doing? How immodest in me to be so familiar with an utter stranger! I don't know your name, even. Pray tell me it?"

This question seemed to have a most dispiriting effect upon the poor young man.

He got up from his kneeling attitude, bowed graciously to the lady, and said:

"Pehmit me to intwoduce myself. My name is——"

Here he stopped as usual, in order to compress his vocal organs, and in doing which he always made those fearful grimaces; but suddenly he suspended these actions, because he seemed to have bethought himself of a better method, for he took a card from an elegant card-case and handed it to the bashful widow.

"Rurick Rarrer!" she read in dulcet tones, and the owner of this beautiful name acknowledged it with a bow and a gratifying expression of countenance.

"Cowect!" said he. "Wuwick Wa—, just as it is pwinted theh."

"My dear Rurick!" whispered the captivating match-maker. And then she added, with charming *naïveté* and cast-down eyes, "My name is Eglantine."

"Oh, Eglantine!" burst out Rurick, in an ecstacy of joy. "Thank God, you ah called Eglantine."

"Do you like my name?" asked the matrimonial agent, tenderly beaming upon her youthful adorer.

"Extwemely well," said Rarrer, rapturously.

"Because it is mine?" inquired the love-stricken dame, further.

"No; because it contains no Avv!" cried Rarrer, forgetting himself. "Just think how unhappy I would have been if I had to call you, a hundwed times a day, Wosa, Wicca, or Wegina; foh as you have no doubt alweady obsehved, I am so unfohtunate as to be unable to pwonounce the lettah Avv. But that is only one of the annoyances that make my life misevable."

Madame Baldrian gazed upon him in an inexpressibly tender manner.

"I will make you happy!" said she, in the most dulcet tones.

Rarrer suppressed a mournful sigh.

"How could I mistake you for that dangerous person against whom the anonymous writer warned me!" went on the enraptured match-maker, tenderly gazing upon her youthful lover. "I feel as if I have known you a long while. I must have met you somewhere. I feel quite sure of that."

"You saw me at Majoh W-w-wumpel's," answered Rarrer. "I had a shawl wapped about my head, because I was plagued by a tevvible toothache, and you gave me a wemedy that welieved me!"

"Correct!" cried the infatuated widow. "See

how indelibly your dear picture was impressed in my heart!"

They then sat down near each other upon the sofa and chatted for a full hour, and Rarrer often thought that he had made a great sacrifice and was doomed to suffer real martyrdom, since, if the lady was so tender and affectionate now, what more could he expect in the future?

But when it began to grow dark it occurred to him that it was time to go, especially as he had missed his dinner.

"Rosa will show you the way out with a light," said Madame Baldrian, tenderly, after the last parting words had been said.

"No, no!" cried Rarrer, vehemently, stopping on the door-sill. "If you weally love me, then leave that cwazy Wosa in heh kitchen! I'll be gwateful to you foh it!"

"Just as you wish; but take good care of yourself!" whispered the matrimonial agent, with languishing looks.

"Nevah feah, dear Eglantine!"

"Be sure that you come early to-morrow!"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

When he closed the door behind him the apostle of matrimony went to the window, leaned her heated brow against the cold pane of glass, and gazed after her adorer.

And after her adorer closed the hall-door he started on a run, as if he was chased by Old Nick himself.

"Ah!" he reflected, just as he had started, "she is pwobably at the window. I must look back again."

And without slacking his pace he turned his head and gazed in the direction of her apartment.

"Just as I thought!" murmured he to himself. "It was well that I turned awound, foh politeness always makes a good imp——"

Just then he ran against a tree with so much force that all his bones rattled.

Instantly a window was opened in the apartment occupied by the beloved being, and a clear, tender voice was heard to ask anxiously in the twilight:

"Did you hurt yourself, dear Rurick?"

"No!" he replied, yet feeling sore all over. "I am not huwt at all. I only wan against a twee."

"Thank God! you are not hurt. Good-night, dear Rurick!"

"Good-night, Eglantine!"

Rarrer rushed on his way further.

"The deed is done!" he muttered to himself. "I have sacwificed myself and will mawy heh, and when she is my wife I'll give heh no time to make others unhappy. This is the cwowning wohk of my life. Whetheh I am unhappy in this way oh in anotheh," he went on with his soliloquy, "is all the same in the end, and if 'I gwoan and sweat undeh life's buhdens,' as my fwiend *Hamlet* says, I have at least the consoling and ennobling thought, that many others will theheby be wendehed happy, oh, at least, not be wendehed unhappy. I wondah what will Behlin say when my engagement is made public? My fwiends will say that I am cwazy; they will laugh at me, as usual. But what does that signify! I am a mahtyh to a gweat and holy cause! That thought waises me above dewision!"

Although he went direct to the nearest restaurant and ordered a good meal, yet he was unable to eat it; and when he went home that evening he found that he could not sleep, his nervous system being so fearfully excited by the occurrences of that day. At last, toward morning, sleep finally closed

his tired eyelids, and in the dream he appeared to himself as an angel with beautifully pink wings floating in an azure ether.

But the dream lied, as dreams usually do; for Rarrer was no angel, as we will indisputably prove in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

The critical period in the lives of the individuals whom we have described in the course of this narrative has been passed.

Time, with its soothing and appeasing hand, has smoothed the hearts and minds, and dampened alike the hopes of too great bliss as the fears of great tortures.

The anticipations are, indeed, always greater than the realities. The expectations of pleasure are always greater than the pleasures themselves.

This is sad, but true and logical, for in anticipating a pleasure a portion of the real pleasure has already been discounted; and so, again, is the pain lessened in prospective sufferings, because a good portion of it has already been experienced in advance.

A remedy against these two conditions is found in imagining a thing neither too good nor too bad.

In the first case the actual joy will be vastly augmented, in the latter the torture will be lessened.

Baron Branco, after he recovered from the not dangerous flesh-wound which he received in the duel with Legation Counsellor von Frohberg, married Fräulein Silberstein, with the tawny skin and nose like the beak of an eagle.

It is not absolutely necessary to describe particularly what sort of a life they led.

He gave her his high-sounding name, and, in return, he got some ringing dollars.

Since both of them made a good transaction they

might be deemed as being well satisfied. It all depends upon the expectations one may entertain in life.

Karl von Frohberg and his wife left Berlin and went to live upon their estate in the country, where Annie faithfully kept her promise.

Well for those marriages in which neither spring nor autumn storms, which often ruthlessly tear up the happiness of life, occur.

Deception is poetry ; truth is reality.

Legation Counsellor Hermann von Frohberg and Government Solicitor von Collin celebrated their marriages with the two lovely sisters on the same day.

That the marriage of the two life-long friends, Hermann and Louisa, will be a happy one can be readily surmised. Where both persons know each other thoroughly it is not possible for either to be deceived, and it is deception that usually forms the first kernel for discontent and unhappiness.

When matrimony is no speculation—that is to say, no business transaction—the thought of marrying, in most cases, is aroused by the burning or tender glance of a beautiful form.

That thought first strikes the most sensitive spot —the heart; and if it explodes there, every other consideration will be silenced, until it is awakened by the first deception, intensely frightened.

When love is engendered through many years' attachment, as in the case of Louisa and Hermann von Frohberg, it will last like a solidly built house, without any loss of sweetness, for the intoxication present in the former variety of matrimony soon evaporates and nothing remains but headaches and empty hearts.

Solicitor von Collin could deem himself one of the few fortunate individuals who, at the right time, was redeemed by true love from the shackles of *blasé* calculation and speculation.

The vivacious and amiable Wanda always retained a warm heart and spirit, and her husband, therefore, did not degenerate into one of those rich men whose avarice grows with their wealth, and who only accumulates riches for the sake of possessing them. He was an intelligent and productive proprietor of the estate which he purchased, considerate to his tenants, and became a useful member of society, so that he was widely loved and greatly respected.

Wanda remained as she was. Natures like hers do not change with years.

She always felt extremely happy, because she had such a good and loving husband, and especially because she was not obliged to play the piano any more.

Almost all young ladies feel happy when at last they are released from this obligation by becoming wives.

Most young ladies jingle on the piano because their mothers desire them to do that, and because all their young-lady friends jingle upon that instrument, and it is an inexpressible joy to them if they are required to play no more arias and dances, which give no one any pleasure—least of all themselves.

But even those girls who were passionately fond of playing on the piano do not play a single note from the moment they have become married women.

The fact of the matter is they soon get something else to play with.

Instead of their being obliged to sing, someone now sings to them; and albeit the tones are not very fine nor very clear, still they come from the purest hearts, and in the ears of young mothers sound more delightful than the noblest operatic melody.

Wanda soon had her baby to play with.

Little round Commercial Counsellor Miller, the father of the two daughters just alluded to, parted very unwillingly with them.

Fortunately, however, his almost unbearable loneliness did not last long.

A short time after the marriage of his daughters, his wife, whose acquaintance we had not the pleasure of forming, because she was always ailing, presented him with a third child, and as this one was a boy the little commercial counsellor felt inexpressibly proud and happy.

When he walked in the street he puffed himself up so that many persons stopped and gazed at him in surprise.

He would have told them why he "put on such grand airs," but he did not think it was becoming.

Nevertheless he never went to Ostend again, nor to any other sea-bathing place; it seemed to be altogether too dangerous, however agreeable it was to him in his silent moments.

In regard to Privy Counsellor Dr. Staberow, he was obliged to pass a great deal of his time in patent-leather boots and in railway-carriages.

His mother-in-law was like the Wandering Jew. She seemed to have no rest, and made her daughter equally restless, so that the latter had no time for anything that would afford her husband any pleasure.

Poor Staberow had to do very severe penance for entertaining such presumptuous thoughts—of spending the rest of his days in comfort and rest, with his young wife by his side, knitting stockings, while he sat in an arm-chair, with his legs stretched out, and yawned.

In winter he was obliged to go from one social affair to another, from one ball to another.

In summer, on the other hand, he wandered about all over the globe, like the spirit of a sinful tourist who was condemned, after death, to travel as incessantly, as he did while living.

The tired Staberow was compelled to be in a constant state of transportation. He travelled day and night; often he ate his meals at irregular intervals; some days, indeed, he did not eat any at all. He climbed mountains, with and without snow-covered tops; also the highest towers. He visited the least-frequented cities, bathed in all kinds of seas, felt bored in all places of amusement, was vexed everywhere, and was dreadfully provoked because his mother-in-law never got tired and his wife never had any time to spare for him.

Once, while travelling upon the back of a camel, *avec odeur*, through the Desert of Sahara, he came near being sun-struck.

Fortunately it did not get so far; it was only a sun-beam that struck his head and penetrated into his brain.

A happy thought, a brilliant idea, occurred to him, and to it he was indebted for his subsequent delivery.

On returning to Berlin, after his journeyings in the wilderness of Sahara, his first visit was to Madame Baldrian, with whom he was engaged in a conversation that lasted two hours.

Three weeks later his mother-in-law was married to a general who had a broad-order ribbon, a long mustache, and a smooth crown.

After the wedding, however, the general took off his brilliant uniform and put on a dressing-gown.

Thus was the mother-in-law led astray a second time; but Privy Counsellor Dr. Staberow was thereafter released, and he was able to enjoy the rest which he desired and waited for so long.

His wife, sure enough, had more time for him now, which was very agreeable to him.

In the very same year of his return kind Providence blessed him with a robust boy.

We have already ascertained Major Rumpel's destiny.

In many respects he led a much quieter life than formerly, but in others again he did not.

His meals, especially, were much improved.

As we have already said, the stout Augusta in many respects became more peaceable and more quiet, in the fear that excitement and mental disturbance might prove dangerous to her. She became exceedingly careful, and took the utmost precaution against being jolted, especially in going up and down stairs.

But the longed-for objects to make her household complete never came.

That unfortunate martyr, Rurick Rarrer, soon after his engagement, married the charming widow, Madame Eglantine Baldrian, *née* Hymensvotary.

The noble youth thought that by thus sacrificing himself he would save countless numbers of human beings of both sexes from destruction, by attracting to himself a foretaste of purgatory that would last till his dying day.

But now, as at all other times, he made a totally wrong calculation,

To his great surprise, he lived very happily with the former relict of Commercial Counsellor Baldrian.

After marrying Rarrer she concentrated all the interest she entertained for matrimony in general upon him, and became exceedingly devoted to him.

She always had had great faith, and had taken great interest in matrimony; but as no one would marry her, she had labored to induce others to marry.

But after she entered the holy bonds of matrimony herself she became perfectly satisfied, renounced her calling, and cared all the more for her own family.

We have only to report what became of the colossal Rosa.

She was disposed of to a languishing tailor, even before the marriage of her mistress, but, unfortunately, she crushed him to death in a sudden fit of tender passion.

THE END.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

00022829282